

C. R. STAM



# 1 CORINTHIANS



COMMENTARY

on

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL  
TO THE CORINTHIANS**

*by*

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Sincere thanks are due many who have helped us in the preparation of this volume. Of these several stand out particularly.

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We have always been grateful to those who have written in to make suggestions or offer friendly criticism, and this time there were many of these – perhaps due to the fact that *I Corinthians* deals with so many different subjects. Again we express our gratitude to these friends, only this time we ask your indulgence in cases where we did not accept *your* suggestion or criticism! With so many interpretations of so many subjects to consider, we know you will understand that we cannot always opt for the interpretation that seems most reasonable to you. Heartfelt thanks, though, and the book does include suggestions from many of you.

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Due to illness and needless but unavoidable controversy over the *King James Version* it took the author four years to complete the work, while our readers kept asking, “Do you have any idea when the *I Corinthians* commentary will be finished?” Hearty thanks, patient friends, and we pray that now our comments on this great book will prove a rich blessing to you.

The Author

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## PREFACE

A few decades ago there were many dispensationalists who taught that the Corinthian epistles, having been written before Acts 28, do not contain God's program for the Body of Christ or His message for the world today. Paul's earlier epistles, they alleged, were written mainly to the Jews, since it was only at Acts 28:28 that Paul declared: "*The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.*"

Due largely to the influence of Pastor J. C. O'Hair, however, this teaching, then called "the Acts 28 theory," was widely, publicly and thoroughly put to the test of the Scriptures, rightly divided, and proved fallacious, so that it is no longer as widely embraced.

Indeed, one verse from this very epistle to the Corinthians affords ample proof that these Corinthian letters were addressed, not to an assembly of Jews, but rather to one composed overwhelmingly of Gentiles. It is in I Cor. 12:2 that we read:

"Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols....."

Thus the Corinthian epistles were written to Gentiles in the flesh and do vitally concern us who live in this Gentile dispensation.

But there is an additional reason to believe that the Corinthian epistles are especially applicable to the day in which we live and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Let us illustrate this by asking and answering the following question: *Which church of Paul's day was most like the Church of our day?*

Shall we liken the Church of our day to *the Church at Rome*? Hardly, for to them he wrote:

". . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (1:8).

He referred, of course, to their faith in the gospel *he* had proclaimed (1:5; 16:25,26). But in the Church today Paul's clear, unadulterated "*gospel of the grace of God*" is pushed into the background, while the term "the gospel of the kingdom" and half a dozen other terms now inapplicable, are applied to a message as confused as it is undispensational.

Further, the believers at Rome had great affection for Paul and great respect for his apostleship, as is evident from the long list of personal friends to whom he sends his greetings in Romans 16, and from the fact that when, later, he

approached Rome in chains, "the brethren"<sup>1</sup> greatly encouraged him by coming all the way down to Appii Forum<sup>2</sup> to meet him and escort him back to Rome.

But the Church today has not only pushed Paul's *gospel* into the background; it has all but ignored Paul himself and his apostolic authority. As the present Church of Rome follows Peter rather than Paul, the vast majority of Bible-believing Protestants, yes, even of true born-again believers, spend more time discussing the history and prophecy of the Old Testament, and the stories of the Old Testament, the "Gospels" and the book of Acts, than proclaiming the powerful message of grace committed to Paul and to us. Indeed, "the words of Jesus" spoken during His earthly ministry are given definite priority over the words of the glorified Lord revealed to and through Paul ([Gal. 1:11](#); [Eph. 3:1-3](#); [I Cor. 14:37](#); [II Cor. 13:2](#)).

Shall we then liken the Church of today to that of the Thessalonians of Paul's day? Indeed not! The persecutions which Paul and the Thessalonian believers endured together produced an affectionate comradeship which only such fellow-suffering can effect. So close were they to each other, and so deeply did the Thessalonian saints respect Paul's apostleship that in his letters to them he does not even address them as "an apostle of Jesus Christ," but simply as "Paul." How can the Church of today possibly be compared with those deeply-beloved followers and fellow-soldiers of the Apostle Paul?

Is the Church of today more like the *Philippian* church, then? Again, No indeed! This church too was born of persecution. They had seen the clothes torn off Paul and Silas, had witnessed their scourging and imprisonment - and had become partakers of his afflictions. Of all the churches Paul had founded that at Philippi showed most concern for him, seeking him out again and again to make sure that he was cared for (See [Phil. 4:10-19](#)). Little wonder they, like the Thessalonian believers, were so close to Paul. By no means is this so of the Church today, which has dismally failed to give him due respect, let alone due affection for all he has done, especially through his epistles, to enrich us spiritually.

Shall we compare the Church today, then, with those of *Ephesus and Colosse*? Never! To these churches Paul could write about "the mystery," the very capstone of divine revelation, while the Church today can digest no more than the "milk" of the Word, few even knowing what "the mystery" is. Indeed, not only are most professing Christians shallow and superficial in their knowledge of the Word; their general *ignorance* of the Word is appalling.

Neither can we suggest the churches of *Galatia*, for these, though misled, sought to please God by doing more than He required; by adding law to grace.

Thus we come to the Church of *Corinth*, and here the similarity is striking!

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<sup>1</sup> Note: not "*certain* brethren," or "*some* of the brethren," but "*the* brethren," i.e., as a body.

<sup>2</sup> Lit., the market at Appii.

Like the Church today, the Corinthian believers were superficial in their perception of the truth, and unbelievably permissive in their moral conduct. Also, as a congregation they despised Paul's apostolic authority. We shall go into this in much greater detail as we proceed with the text of I Corinthians, but it is basically in these three respects that they resembled the Church of our day.

There is no doubt about it: the Church today, perceived as a whole, is not Roman, or Thessalonian, or Philippian, or Colossian, or Ephesian - but *Corinthian* in character.

Of the fellow-suffering and sacrifice with Paul that the Thessalonians and Philipians knew so well, the Church at Corinth, like the Church today, knew little indeed. Of the high and holy truths which fill the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, the Corinthians, like the Church today, likewise knew almost nothing.

Certainly, as we consider the Corinthian epistles we must bow our heads and confess that the Church today - even the true Church within the professing Church - is largely *Corinthian* in character: (1) in its superficial perception of the truth, (2) in its moral permissiveness, and (3) in its attitude toward the apostolic authority of Paul, the God-appointed apostle of the present dispensation.

We do not include here the fact that the Corinthians had all the sign gifts, for these were gifts of God and by no means marked them as spiritual (See [I Cor. 1:5-7](#); cf. [3:1-3](#)). Indeed, it is significant that these delinquent believers, babes rather than adults and carnal rather than spiritual, should be the very ones who made most of these gifts, much like those who today seek so earnestly to recover these gifts. Thus we have still another reason why the teachings of Paul in the Corinthian letters *do* apply to our day and should be carefully studied.

It is with the above in mind that we send this book to press, with an earnest prayer that it will provide light and blessing to many of God's children who are struggling with the moral and spiritual problems with which we are all confronted in "this present evil age."

-CORNELIUS R. STAM

Chicago, Illinois  
June 1, 1988

# INTRODUCTION

## THE CHURCH AT CORINTH MIRACLE OF GRACE

The church at Corinth actually had its beginning in a Jewish synagogue-probably a large synagogue, for **Corinth** was a large city. Here Paul *reasoned ... every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks*" (Acts 18:4).

The majority of the Jews, however, were not receptive to the truth, for we read that when Silas and Timothy appeared on the scene, "Paul was pressed in the spirit, and *testified* [Gr., *diamarturomai*, to protest solemnly] to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Ver. 5). Evidently they did not *wish* to believe.

Paul's protest only made them more determined, however, for the next verse informs us that "*they opposed themselves*", i.e., set themselves in opposition, "*and blasphemed.*" At this, Paul, shaking out his raiment against them, said:

"Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Ver. 6).

With this he took the believers to the home of a Greek, a Gentile, called Justus, doubtless one of the attendants<sup>3</sup> who had received Paul's message and had now invited him to hold services in his own home. We have called this congregation "the church next door," because Justus' house "*joined hard to the synagogue*" (Acts 18:7).

But what about the ethics of choosing such a meeting place? Think of the strained feelings and heated arguments that would naturally result as the two congregations met outside! And even if Paul's group met at carefully selected hours when the synagogue services were not in session, or if they now met on the first day of the week, it surely must have infuriated the Jews at the synagogue to have Paul start meetings *right next door - at the home of a Gentile!*

It must not be supposed, however, that Paul accepted Justus' invitation out of resentment or spite. Rather he did so as a protest against the obstinate majority, and to emphasize the purpose of God, that "*through their [Israel's] fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles,*" and so "*provoke [the Jews] to jealousy,*" that some of them might still turn in faith to Christ (See [Rom. 11:11](#)).

To some extent, at least, this action on Paul's part had the desired effect, for presently "*Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house,*" with the further result that "*many of the Corinthians hearing believed,*

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<sup>3</sup> Many Greeks did attend the services at Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:42; 17:1-4; 18:4). Some, not all, of these were proselytes.

*and were baptized"* (Acts 18:8). And that was not all, for soon after this Sosthenes, the next chief ruler of the synagogue, received a sound beating right in Gallio's court at the hands of the unbelieving Greeks, who hated the Jews anyway. The beating evidently did him good, spiritually, for in writing later to the Corinthian church, the apostle salutes them *with "Sosthenes our brother!"*

This surely indicates that Sosthenes was well known to them, and since no mention is made in the record of any other Sosthenes, evidently this Sosthenes was indeed Crispus' successor, who now had also come to know Christ.

Thus increasing numbers of believers from the synagogue, plus "many of the Corinthians" who believed, soon overcrowded Justus' home, so that the church in the house became the "big city church" which it evidently was when Paul later wrote to them.

### **THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS**

The encouragement of the above picture gives way to disappointment, however, as we read of the serious failures among the Corinthian believers. They were shallow and permissive, there were divisions and contentions among them. Moreover, their disrespect for the apostle was reprehensible. Though doubtless the largest among the churches established by Paul, and though, in the midst of great physical danger, he had labored tirelessly among them for a year and six months, they had not even felt the responsibility to care for his meager needs (I Cor. 9:6-15). He had to make tents to make ends meet. And this is not the only evidence we have of their selfishness (See [II Cor. 8 and 9](#)). Also, there was among them a strong tendency toward legalism, Jewish legalism, and strangely with this, gross immorality! and with *this* a most inappropriate spirit of pride (I Cor. 5:1,2). Of course there were exceptions among them, such as Gaius, the household of Stephanus, and at first Aquila and Priscilla, but these were distinctly in the minority.

This is only a fleeting glimpse of the moral and spiritual condition that prevailed among the believers at Corinth. Those who wonder how Paul could call these failing believers "saints," however, should bear in mind their background and surroundings, for actually the church at Corinth, with all its faults, was one of the wonders of Church history and one of the great triumphs of God's grace. Indeed Paul, by the Spirit, calls them the "seal" of his apostleship (I Cor. 9:2).

### **CORINTH IN PAUL'S DAY**

Corinth, in Paul's day, was the capital of Greece and its commercial metropolis. It was also the center of entertainment for Greece and the whole known world.

## ITS COMMERCE AND ENTERTAINMENT

**Corinth** was situated at the southern end of an isthmus where the waters of the Mediterranean Sea nearly cut Greece in two. It was a city with *two* harbors, one situated on the Gulf of Corinth, to the west, and the other on the Gulf of Saron, to the east; both only a few miles from the city.

These harbors were by far the most important in the whole great peninsula between the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. Here great sea-going vessels, loaded with produce, spices, lumber, clothing, precious stones, etc., came from Asia Minor and Palestine to unload at the eastern port. Their cargo was then conveyed the ten miles or so across the isthmus where it was transferred to other ships going to Italy and Spain. In some cases, even, smaller vessels were hauled across the isthmus. Thus Corinth had great commercial advantages as the central point of the seaway between Asia Minor and Palestine on the east, and Italy and Spain on the west - and vice versa.

One can imagine that a city in such a location would be known far and wide for its wealth, luxury and entertainment. Little wonder it has been called "the Paris of antiquity."

In the crowded streets of Corinth the apostle found himself among all kinds of people from all over the known world: Roman freedmen, slaves, big businessmen, or people looking for business opportunities or employment, sailors, travelers, gamblers, pleasure seekers -- and most of them *away from home*. Here too they had the world-renowned *Isthmian Games*, boxing, wrestling, racing, etc., all referred to by Paul in his letters to the Corinthians - and these games brought more thousands of sports enthusiasts - and the participants - to the city.

Since port cities are generally known for revelry and dissipation, one can imagine the wanton living that prevailed in this great *two-port* metropolis. There was probably no city on earth more profligate (See [1 Cor. 6:9-11](#)). Indeed, the very name *Corinthian*, in Paul's day, was synonymous with immorality, so that one who "played the Corinthian" had fallen into immoral wickedness, and a "Corinthian banquet" was a drunken orgy.

## ITS CULTURE

Corinth was also a center of culture. Here was an abundance of Greek and other art, especially sculpture, and various forms of more refined entertainment.

Moreover, next to Athens it was most prominent for the great Greek philosophers who held forth there; those subtle and accomplished reasoners who prided themselves on their higher learning but failed to face up to the obvious facts of man's sin and his deep need of salvation. We still have them with us today.

Paul tore these "intellectuals" to ribbons in his first letter to the Corinthian believers, especially in I Cor. 1:20-24, where he challenges "the wise of this world":

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

"For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of [the] preaching to save them that believe.

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

How powerful is the gospel of the grace of God as compared with the best that this world's intellectuals can offer! When did *their* teachings ever bring about the wholesome and blessed results wrought by the preaching of "the gospel of the grace of God"?

## ITS RELIGION

The religion of Corinth centered around the goddess *Aphrodite*, the Greek counterpart of the Roman Venus. Webster's Dictionary describes her as "*the goddess of beauty and love, and more especially sensual love.*"

Aphrodite's great temple dominated the city, historians tell us, and, with her lesser temples scattered about, employed more than a thousand temple prostitutes. In other words, the *religion* of Corinth centered around sex. And this greatly enriched the coffers of an already-rich city.

Much of this is alluded to in these epistles, but we mention it here for two reasons:

1. So that we might sympathize with these often-stumbling believers, understanding their background and the situation in which they found themselves.
2. That we might recognize what an amazing miracle of grace it was that there even *was* a Christian assembly in this city.

In the city of Corinth Paul was indeed faced with a great challenge, great dangers and, by the grace of God, the prospect of great victories. It would be no easy task. Indeed the apostle wrote to them later:

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Cor. 2:3).

Still later, having had to reprove them for their disorderly conduct as Christians, he wrote:

"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you, with many tears" (II Cor. 2:4).

Further on we will discuss more fully the apostle's reference to them as "*sanctified in Christ Jesus*" and "*saints by calling.*"

### **PAUL'S ARRIVAL AT CORINTH**

From the record in Acts we find that when Paul "came to Corinth" he "*found* a certain Jew named Aquila ... with his wife, Priscilla....

"And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers" (Acts 18:1-3).

The word "found," here, may indicate that Paul had been previously informed about Aquila and his occupation. In any case, it was here that he found the profitable employment he would need to carry on his ministry.

While laboring with Aquila and Priscilla he was able to get "the lay of the land," as it were, and to reason with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue, to prove to them from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ - for if they denied that the crucified Jesus was indeed the Christ, how could they trust Him as Lord and Savior?

Doubtless it was during these early days at Corinth that Paul was led to make an important decision, referred to in I Cor. 2:1,2:

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

*"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."*

To those who were more mature, he did indeed proclaim the "*mystery*," once kept secret, but "*ordained before the world unto our glory*" (I Cor. 2:6,7). But among the Corinthians it would be "*Christ and Him crucified.*" But here we quote a brief passage from the author's *Acts, Dispensationally Considered*:

"Not that this was not part of his special message for, as we have seen, Paul's *preaching of the cross* was vastly different from that which Peter had preached at Pentecost when he *accused* his hearers of the crucifixion of Christ and called upon them to *repent and be baptized ... for the remission of sins* (Acts 2:38). *The preaching of the cross* was the very *heart* of the great mystery revealed to Paul,

only he could not, on account of their condition, *explain* the mystery to them or show them its transcendent glories (I Cor. 2:1,6,7). Here he must preach only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, as God's power to save and the appeal to holy living." (*Acts, Dispensationally Considered*, Vol. III, P. 124).

This great message, "*the preaching of the cross*," then, contains far more glorious truths than the uninitiated realize. This is evident from the great spiritual victories accomplished by its preaching.

## SAINTS INDEED

There are three phrases in Paul's opening words to the Corinthian believers (I Cor. 1:2) which should be thoughtfully considered by those who observe only the gross disorders which prevailed among them. They are the phrases, "*the church of God*," "*sanctified in Christ Jesus*" and "*saints by calling*."<sup>4</sup> These three phrases mark these believers as saints indeed. As the "*church*" (Gr., *ekklesia*, called-out ones) of God, they were *His* in the truest sense of the word, "*saints by calling*"; God had appointed them such.

But *how* were these ungodly sinners made saints? The answer is that they were "*sanctified [Lit., saintified]*"<sup>5</sup> *in Christ Jesus*." Thus these Corinthians were saints because they were *in Christ*, they had been "*accepted in the Beloved*,"

"In whom we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:6,7).

O, that this were seen by adherents to the Church of Rome, who suppose that one can become a saint only hundreds of years after death-and this after the fulfillment of many qualifications. If only they could see that sinners become saints only when, like these Corinthians, with all their sins, they place their trust in Christ for salvation, so that God now no longer sees them in their sinful selves, but in *Christ*. No one ever got to be a saint in the true Bible sense in any other way. In God's sight there are only *lost sinners and saved saints*, those who, though sinners by nature, have been "*accepted in the Beloved*" and now stand before God "*complete in Him*."

How sad it would be, self-righteous friend, if, *refusing* to acknowledge yourself to be the sinner you are, and *failing* to turn to Christ for salvation, you were eternally lost, while some poor, depraved person, putting his trust in Him, were eternally saved and rejoicing in a position before God, perfect and complete *in Christ!*

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<sup>4</sup> The words "to be" in the phrase "called *to be* saints," are in italics in KJV, indicating that they were supplied by the translators. The sense is that they *were* saints - *by calling*.

<sup>5</sup> The Gr. *hagiazō*, rendered "sanctify," means *to set apart as sacred*, thus a "saint," Gr., *hagion*, is one thus set apart to God.

You say that salvation by grace alone breeds wickedness and sin? The opposite is the case,<sup>6</sup> for there is no greater motive for godly living than salvation by grace. It is not Law observance, or personal worth that saves, but grace alone. God's Word declares that grace, in the nature of the case, teaches, or motivates us....

"... that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world;

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:11-13).

Why not, at the very outset of your reading of this book, unsaved friend, acknowledge yourself to be the sinner you are, and trust in Christ alone for salvation?

"For the wages of sin is death, *but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23).

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . . ." (Acts 16:31).

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<sup>6</sup> The Corinthian believers had been saved from lives of unspeakable wickedness, and it was their *lack* of appreciation of God's grace to them that caused some of them to revert to the sins of the past.

# CHAPTER I

## *I Corinthians 1:1-31*

SALUTATION: Vers. 1,2: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

A TROPHY OF GRACE: How it must have thrilled the heart of Paul to be able to associate Sosthenes with himself in addressing this letter to the Corinthian believers! They had known Sosthenes well as the "chief ruler of the synagogue" who had tried to silence Paul by taking him to a Roman court, only to suffer a sound beating himself which, in the grace of God, brought about his conversion to Christ! (Acts 18:8,12-17).

A CHURCH OF GOD: These Corinthian believers were a "church of God," i.e., one of His called-out assemblies (Gr., *ekklesia*), having been "sanctified *in Christ Jesus*" (Ver. 2). The word *sanctified* is merely old English for *saintified*, for a saint is one who has been *set apart* as sacred to God (Gr., *hagiazō*). Thus believers are "*saintified*" *in Christ*, who took their place at Calvary that they might stand before God "*accepted in the Beloved*" (Eph. 1:6).

Observe how the apostle emphasizes their close unity with the brotherhood everywhere: "*the church of God which is at Corinth ... with<sup>7</sup> all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*" (Ver.2).<sup>8</sup>

Thus as Sosthenes was a dramatic trophy of God's grace, all of the Corinthian believers, indeed, "all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord," are trophies of grace, each one "saintified" in Christ, and together "the church of God," His called-out people.

BENEDICTION: Ver. 3: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

GRACE AND PEACE FROM THE REJECTED FATHER AND HIS REJECTED SON: This opening benediction is found in every one of Paul's epistles signed by his name. In the light of his writings as a whole, it proves to be *more* than a benediction, however; it is an *official declaration* sent from heaven by the rejected Father and His rejected Son.

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<sup>7</sup> Not *kai* = "and," but *sun* = "together with."

<sup>8</sup> The phrase "*both theirs and ours*" may well be meant to emphasize particularly the unity in Christ between the Judaeans and those from among the Gentiles. Certainly the former were included among "*all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Why is not the Holy Spirit mentioned with the Father and the Son? Why not the complete Trinity? Because the Holy Spirit works in the background, as it were, to implement the message sent by the Father and the Son.

The Old Testament makes it clear that the Father was to avenge the world's rejection of His beloved Son (e.g., [Psa. 2:2-5; 110:1](#)) and this He will yet do, as we find both in Paul's epistles and the book of the Revelation. At that time the Lord will return "*in flaming fire, taking vengeance*" upon His enemies (II Thes. 1:8).

Prophetically all was ripe for the judgment to fall at Pentecost ([Acts 2:16-20](#)), but God in grace *interrupted* the prophesied program, saved Saul of Tarsus, the leader of the rebellion, and sent him forth with a message of "grace and peace," an offer of *reconciliation* to all His enemies everywhere, based upon the redemption wrought by Christ at Calvary (II [Cor. 5:18-21](#)). And now the Son, from His exalted position at the Father's right hand, dispenses the riches of His grace and the merits won at Calvary.

GRACE AND PEACE vs. JUDGMENT AND WAR: God has not forgotten His warnings, however. He does not overlook the vice and crime, the greed and hatred, the immorality and blasphemy of this world, and He *will* judge it with fearful retribution.

For the time being, however, "*the dispensation of the grace of God*" continues; He lingers in mercy, not willing that any should perish. But the present dispensation will be followed by a time of terrible "tribulation," at the close of which Rev. 19:11 will be fulfilled. The Lord will return to earth "and *in righteousness [shall] He judge and make war,*" and judgment *and war* are the fearful *opposites of grace and peace*. How grateful we should be that to sinners and saints alike, the glorious proclamation still goes forth: "*Grace be unto you and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ!*"

WHAT COULD HE SAY? Ver. 4: "I Thank God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."

It must have pleased the Apostle Paul, in writing to the churches he had established, to be able to express thanks to God for what had been *accomplished* in and through them.

To the Roman believers he wrote, as we have seen:

". . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8).

The Ephesian epistle seems to have been an encyclical letter, perhaps entrusted to the Ephesians to circulate among the other churches of "Asia," It is the most

impersonal of all his letters, so we would not expect it to contain any such words of commendation as the above.

To the Philippians, however, he wrote warmly:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

"Always, in every prayer of mine for you all, making request *with joy*" (Phil. 1:3,4).

How faithful they had been in their witness for Christ; how generous in their care for Paul and the work he represented! And in all this they had not wavered from the "first day" he had been with them "until now" as he languished in prison at Rome (1:5; 4:10-16). What a church! Every time Paul thought of them it was with thanksgiving! Every time he prayed for them it was with joy!

For the Colossian believers too he thanked God, though he had never even seen them - and he prayed for them "always," he says:

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints" (Col. 1:4).

To the beloved Thessalonians he could write with joy:

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers:

"Remembering without ceasing *your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father*" (I Thes. 1:2,3).

And their faith and love and patience of hope had all grown by the time he wrote his second epistle to them (II Thes. 1:3,4). How such demonstrations of the Spirit's working must have gladdened the apostle's heart!

WHY SO CAUTIOUS NOW? But what is this we find in his salutation to the Corinthian believers in I Cor. 1:4? Here he states himself very cautiously:

"I thank God always on your behalf,<sup>9</sup> *for the grace of God* which is given you by Jesus Christ."

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<sup>9</sup> NASB renders this "concerning," but this is incorrect. The Greek *huper* is used about 150 times in the New Testament and consistently it has the idea of "*for the sake of.*" Often it is rendered simply "for," as in "My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20), i.e., "in your behalf." Thus Paul did not merely thank God concerning the Corinthian believers; he thanked God in *their behalf, or for their sakes*, much as an attorney might say to his guilty client, "For your sake I'm glad the judge failed to notice that incriminating evidence." The thought, then, is just as expressed in the *King James Version*. The Corinthian Christians were, as an assembly, living anything but God-honoring lives, but the apostle thanked God on *their behalf* for the grace God had given them by Jesus Christ.

Mark well: Paul does not say that he thanks God for the fruit of the Spirit in their lives, or for what God has wrought through them. He rather thanks God *on their behalf* that God has been so gracious to *them*.

I Corinthians is a letter of reproof, and II Corinthians the follow-up. God had saved these Corinthians and had enriched them with various supernatural gifts, but they had allowed these gifts to cause them to become puffed up and contentious and careless about their conduct as Christians. So the apostle thanks God only for the grace given to them, and solemnly reproofs, rebukes and exhorts them to honor the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives. What more could he say? What more could he do? Should he have *praised* them for their delinquency?

The case of the Galatians was comparable, but even more reprehensible. In Paul's letter to them we are struck with the total absence of any word of commendation. As with all the churches, he wishes them "grace and peace," but here he then immediately launches into a stern message of censure and reproof. Indeed, he does not hide from them his deep misgivings over their spiritual condition, saying:

"I am afraid of [concerning] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.... I stand in doubt of you. . ." (Gal. 4:11,20).

And what about us, dear reader: you and me? What if the Apostle Paul, that faithful warrior for "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery" - what if he were to write to *us* today. Could he salute us with joy and with thanksgiving to God for our testimony, our faithfulness and generosity toward the Lord's work, or for our faith, love and patience of hope? Or would he have to write cautiously, thanking God only for His goodness to us, knowing how little we deserved any commendation? Or, worse still, would he have for us only words of reproof, standing in anxious doubt as to our very salvation?

God help us to face up to these serious matters thoughtfully and prayerfully, and to act upon them with resolution so that, did we receive a letter from Paul, it would contain those blessed words:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

HOW WERE THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS ENRICHED BY GOD? Vers. 5-7:  
"That in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge;

"Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

"So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

How were these Corinthian saints "enriched" by God? Evidently by the *gifts* of prophecy and knowledge (Ver. 5; cf. Ver. 7). And thus the testimony of God was confirmed in them (Ver. 6). But let us consider this more carefully:

I Cor. 1:22 states that "*the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.*" Why, then were the signs of Pentecost wrought among Gentile believers?

In answer it must be remembered that this assembly of believers had begun in a Jewish synagogue, had then moved to the home of a Gentile, and had now become a large city church, composed predominantly of Gentiles, though also of some Jews. Moreover the synagogue which they had left was carrying on much as before. What, then, would the Jews there think of this Christian church? Surely the *conduct* of these believers would not convince the Jews that this was a work of God, but their miraculous demonstrations *would*, or should, for to the Jews a miracle was a sign that God was at work (See [John 3:2](#)).

Thus God was leaving the Jews without excuse for further unbelief and further refusal to believe Paul's message about Christ. Whatever the carnality, the pride, the permissiveness, the divisions among the Corinthian believers, the Jews were confronted with the *signs*. God *must* be speaking to them. Thus these signs wrought among the Gentiles harmonize perfectly with I Cor. 1:22.

It should be observed that the word "gift" in Ver. 7, is the Greek *charisma* ("grace gift"), a term so widely used in our day as the Charismatic Movement continues to grow in numbers. But the important fact to bear in mind in the light of I Cor. 1:22 and the Pauline Scriptures as a whole, is that these gifts continued only so long as God continued dealing with Israel. Thus we read *not one word* about the sign gifts in any of Paul's later epistles, and in his earlier epistles he indicates that they will vanish away ([I Cor. 13:8](#); [Rom. 8:22,23](#); et al). Now it is almost 1900 years since "the salvation of God," once "of the Jews," was "sent unto the Gentiles" ([John 4:22](#); cf. [Acts 28:28](#)). After this the sign gifts are not once mentioned in Paul's epistles. Rather he emphasizes our position and blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. Who, having come to understand these glorious truths, would sigh for the miracles and signs of Pentecost?

**MIRACLES AND SPIRITUALITY:** The usual reason given for the absence of miraculous powers in our day is lack of faith and spirituality. If only we had the faith of the early believers, it is said: if only we were as spiritual as they, we too would possess these miraculous powers. But the Word of God as to the Corinthian believers is the complete and final answer to this argument.

It is not denied that even the most consecrated believer falls far short of God's standards of spirituality, nor that there is a particular lack of true spirituality among Christians today, but this does not explain our inability to perform the sign gifts of Pentecost. Such an argument would be answered by the case of the Corinthians alone. Paul called them unspiritual babes (I Cor. 3:1) and sternly rebuked them for their carnality, their envying and strife and divisions (I Cor. 3:1-3), for their

immorality (5:1), for their dishonesty and oppression of each other (6:7,8), for their failure to give toward the work of the Lord (9:11-14), for their selfishness and pride (11:21,22), and rebukes them with the words: "*And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned*" (I Cor. 5:2; cf., 4:18).

The absence of true and legitimate sign gifts today, then, must have another explanation. This explanation we propose to present in this book.<sup>10</sup>

WAITING: Meantime the Corinthian believers are said to have been "*waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ver. 7).

As we have seen, the present "dispensation of the grace of God" is a divine interruption of the prophetic program. While the establishment of our Lord's kingdom on earth is held in abeyance, He is sending forth an offer of "grace and peace" and forming "the Church which is His [Christ's] Body," and which is to be saved from the wrath to come (I Thes. 1:9,10). Before our Lord declares war on this Christ-rejecting world, He will recall His ambassadors.

Thus we read that the Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (I Thes. 1:9), that the Philippians were to "*look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Phil. 3:20); and that all believers should be "*looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*" (Tit. 2:13).

This is indeed the "blessed hope" of the members of the Body of Christ, and the Corinthian believers, with all their failures - and with whatever degree of eagerness - are said to have been "waiting" for its realization. This answers the unscriptural teaching that only the "worthy" will be caught up at the Rapture, for if the Corinthians were not *legitimately* waiting for this event, Paul would surely have said so in Ver. 7. But it is evident from many Scripture passages that all true believers in Christ, whatever their virtues or sins, will be caught up when Christ comes for His saints. The Rapture is *part of* "the gospel of *the grace of God*" and, along with the resurrection, comes under the heading of "*the gospel which I preached unto you*" (I Cor. 15:1, 51-54).

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

CONFIRMED TO THE END BECAUSE GOD IS FAITHFUL: Vers. 8,9: "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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<sup>10</sup> Meantime, the present alleged restoration of the Pentecostal signs should be considered in the light of such Scriptures as I Cor. 1:22; 13:8 and all the Scriptures which emphasize the absence of sign gifts in Paul's later ministry. Also, such passages as Matt. 24:24; 11 Thes. 2:9; 11 Thes. 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:1, *et al*, which show Satan's influence in the realm of the miraculous. The Editor has written several booklets on this subject.

There could be only one reason why these failing Corinthians were to be "confirmed unto the end" and presented "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is found in the opening words of Ver. 9: "*God is faithful.*" How grateful we should be that though we are unfaithful." "*He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself*" (II Tim. 2:13)!

Just as surely as Paul had been "called [by God] to be an apostle" (Ver. 1), that they had been called to be saints" (Ver. 2), so surely had they been "called unto the fellowship of ... Jesus Christ our Lord" (Ver. 9). Nothing could change that; God would not go back on His Word. The third word rendered "called" here is somewhat different in the Greek, but still a close synonymy. It is a balance between being invited and summoned, thus the English word "called" could hardly be improved upon to express the Spirit's meaning.

Note: Paul did not say, "You have been called unto fellowship *with* Christ," but "unto *the* fellowship of Christ." Thousands had already been enjoying this fellowship, and the Corinthian believers had been called to join in it too (Cf. [Eph. 3:9](#); [Col. 1:1,2](#)). It is a sad fact that millions of regenerated believers today, like the Corinthians of old, *belong* to this fellowship, but have not yet come to *enjoy* it (See again [Eph. 3:9](#); [Col. 1:1,2](#)), for this "fellowship of Christ" assures fellowship with each other, and the closer we are to Christ, experientially, the closer we will be to each other.

CHRISTIAN UNITY: Ver. 10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Thus the Apostle Paul wrote to the "carnal" and divided church at Corinth. And this passage takes on special significance in our day, when the Church, even the true Church of regenerated believers, is caught up in the grip of division and confusion, offering to the world anything but a united testimony to the grace and glory of God.

In the Scriptures, however, there are two aspects of unity among God's people which generally go unrecognized. One is related to prophecy; the other to the "mystery." We request the reader's careful attention as we deal briefly with these.

UNITY IN THE KINGDOM: The Unity which our Lord urged upon His disciples basically concerned the *heart* and the *soul*. They were exhorted to love each other, forgive each other, share with each other, etc. This is confirmed by the "new commandment" of John 13:34, by His exhortation to forgive the offending brother "until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22), and by His constant insistence: "Give to him that asketh of thee. . ." (Matt. 5:42), "*He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none. . .*" (Luke 12:33), and "*Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together shall men give into your bosom*" (Luke 6:38).

This is the very essence of the *Sermon on the Mount*. In the kingdom which our Lord proclaimed all would live spontaneously for each other. We have a foretaste of this in the way the disciples lived at Pentecost, when "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*" The record states:

"And all that believed were together, and had *all things common*:

"And *sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need*" (Acts 2:44,45).

"And the multitude of them that believed were *of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked*" (Acts 4:32-34).

Here we have 5,000 (men alone, besides women and children) all living spontaneously for each others' welfare, so wholly so that *none* among them claimed *anything* as his own, with the result that none of them "lacked." What a delightful way to live! And this will be the lifestyle under Messiah's reign. Of course this way of living was made possible only by the fact that "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,*" which is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit had taken complete possession of them, much as whatever takes possession of the mind is said to "fill" it. All this is confirmed by Ezek. 36:27, where we read with reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit:

"And I will put My Spirit within you, and CAUSE YOU to walk in My statutes, and *ye shall keep My judgments and do them.*

This prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost and when, due to Israel's rejection of Christ and His kingdom, that operation of the Spirit ceased, God's people, as now, sadly failed to live together with "one heart and one soul" (See [Acts 15:1,2,7](#); and cf. [Vers. 37-39](#). And now, in "this present evil age," who has ever seen 5000 Christians wholly "of one heart and of one soul"? or 500? or 50? or 5? In fact it would take some doing for even two people--who loved each other dearly--to be wholly "of one heart and of one soul"! This because today believers are not "all filled with the Holy Ghost."

It should not be overlooked that Acts 2:4 is a *statement of fact*. All the disciples *were* filled with the Holy Spirit, not because they were so spiritual, or had prayed earnestly enough, but because "*the day of Pentecost had fully come*" (Acts 2:1), the day for the fulfillment of a long-made and oft-repeated promise.

But surely the believers in the churches founded by Paul were not all filled with the Holy Spirit. The *Corinthians* were poor examples of Christians indeed; the *Galatians* "bit and devoured one another" and desired to go back under the Law; the *Colossians* admitted false doctrine among them; the *Philippians* were

dangerously divided; the *Thessalonians* had among them troublemakers who needed to be told to work for their living.

While at Pentecost all the disciples *were* filled with the Spirit, the Apostle Paul rather *exhorts* believers today: "*Be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18), just as he exhorts and prays that they may be "*filled with the fruits of righteousness*" (Phil. 1:11); "*filled with the knowledge of His will*" (Col. 1:9); "*filled with all the fulness of God*" (Eph. 3:19). That is, these are now *goals* to be attained by grace through faith, and none of us has ever attained to them fully. Not even Paul himself did (Phil. 3:12-14; cf. [Rom. 7:22-25](#)).<sup>11</sup>

UNITY IN THE CHURCH TODAY: When the subject of Christian unity is brought up, what comes to the reader's mind, or at least to the minds of most Christians? Is it not thoughts of mutual love and understanding, of forbearance and submission, of patience and forgiveness? These are indeed *one aspect* of Christian unity, for Psa. 133:1 rightly says of such harmony among God's people:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

However, such passages of Scripture are sometimes used to intimidate faithful believers to compromise with evil and false doctrine and to co-operate with the "majority," no matter how unfaithful to the Word the majority may be. This "go along" philosophy has been widely promoted in the past few decades under the New Evangelicalism. But thus Luther, Calvin, **Darby** and other men of God, who stood faithfully against error and disorder in the Church, were charged with causing division.

But while unity of heart and soul among God's people is indeed important, it must not be overlooked that this had *a particular* place in our Lord's "gospel of the kingdom," in the fulfillment of which they were all to live and one day will live - spontaneously for one another. Indeed, we have seen that for a brief period, when they were all "filled with the Holy Ghost," this was gloriously fulfilled in the Church of Pentecost (Acts 4:22).

Ah, but God has higher objectives for the Body of Christ than just to have them all living together in harmony, and in the above passage (I Cor. 1:10), He gives us the most important aspect of Christian unity in "this present evil age" - which is also "the dispensation of the grace of God."

It should be carefully observed that while the greater emphasis in the "the gospel of the kingdom" was upon the *heart* and the *soul*, the greater emphasis in Paul's epistles is upon the mind and the *spirit*, and a united *testimony* to the grace of God.

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<sup>11</sup> The author deals with this subject in greater depth in his books, *True Spirituality* and *The Believer's Walk In This Present Evil Age*.

Note in I Cor. 1:10: "that ye all *speak the same thing*" and "*that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" Yes, God has higher objectives for us today than to have us all happy in each other's company. He would have the Church bear a strong, united, consistent *testimony* to the glorious message committed to Paul, and now to us, for a doomed world.

I Cor. 1:10 is by no means the only passage from Paul's epistles in which this aspect of Christian unity is emphasized. To prevent incipient division among the Roman believers, he wrote to them:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*;<sup>12</sup> and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Note the emphasis on *doctrine* again. And to the Philippian saints he again emphasizes this aspect of Christian unity:

"Only let your conversation be as it *becometh the gospel of Christ*, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye **STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE MIND, STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL**" (Phil. 1:27).

Note: not "faith in the gospel," but "*the faith of the gospel,*" i.e., *the integrity* of the gospel. "The gospel of the grace of God" must not be diluted, or polluted by any extraneous matter - and certainly it must not be perverted. It is to be proclaimed as *it is*, with its offer of reconciliation, its glorious truths about the "one body," the "one baptism," our heavenly position and blessings and prospects, and all that it includes. And certainly it must *exclude* any religious rites or doctrines belonging to former dispensations.

How much the apostle has to say in his epistles about the importance of *all* believers *understanding* God's message and program for today, so that they may stand and fight for *it together* "in one spirit" and "with one mind." Just a few of these passages are: [Eph. 1: 16-18](#); [Col. 1:9-11](#) and [Col. 2:1-3](#). And why is such *united understanding* so important? The answer is found in Rom. 15:6:

"That ye may with *one mind and one mouth* glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

ONE SCRIPTURAL HERESY: In I Cor. 11:18 the apostle says, "*I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it,*" and then he goes on to explain that in their case this was largely unavoidable and necessary. See Ver. 19:

"For there must be also heresies among you, that *they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*"

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<sup>12</sup> The doctrine which they had learned *from him* through emissaries (See the author's commentary on Romans, Pp. XV to XVII).

The word "heresy" (Gr., *hairesis*) is generally used in a bad sense, *but not always*. The word takes on an evil meaning where sound doctrine is rejected and error espoused, but where *error* is resisted and sound doctrine defended, the case is quite the opposite. Indeed Christianity itself was called heresy by some ([Acts 24:14](#)), as Paul dissented from Judaism to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God.

The sense in which the word is used in I Cor. 11:19 is clear enough if we consider the passage in the light of its context. The Corinthian believers were guilty of many departures from sound doctrine and practice. Result: there was much division and strife among them. "I have heard about this," says the apostle, "and I partly believe it, for there must be heresies among you, *that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*" Thus believers should not object to dissension over important doctrinal issues, for God uses this to bring out the truth and make His true servants manifest.

True believers will surely pray and strive to "be of the same mind" and to "speak the same thing." Despite the discouragements so common in such efforts they will go on "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit": "endeavoring," says the Scripture, for sometimes all efforts to "keep" or maintain this unity fail, and conscientious saints cannot continue in fellowship with those who are disloyal to Christ and to the Word.

In a day when it is so deeply incumbent upon God's people to stand faithfully for the truth of His Word, there are always those who, by much talk about "Christian love" and "unity," would intimidate sincere Christians to go along with the majority, no matter what the circumstances. Love must reign!

Here is where heresy, in its good sense, is needed. This is where those who truly love God, His Word and His people, will rise in dissent. And depend upon it: those who do not dissent, who do not at some point say, "Stop! You are going too far!" who will not do this much in faithfulness to the Christ who died for them, are *not* approved in God's sight and will suffer great loss at the judgment seat of Christ.

Think a moment. The Apostle Paul, who makes this plea for unity in testimony, is the same person who charges Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, [and] exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:1,2): who, in I Cor. 5:5 directs the Corinthians to excommunicate that member of their congregation who is living in sin, and advises them to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Paul's appeal in I Cor. 1:10, then, is not that the Corinthians all believe and speak whatever the majority agrees upon. Rather he implores them "*by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" that they all join together in proclaiming sound doctrine, much as he writes to the Philippians:

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in *one spirit, with one mind* striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

IS CHRIST DIVIDED? Vers. 11-13: "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

*"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"*

*What a rebuke to sectarianism!* Surely it is no honor to God that the Church, which should stand in this world as "one body," has been divided into literally hundreds of denominations in America alone. Samuel Stone was not amiss when he pictured her: *"By schisms rent asunder, by heresies oppressed."*

To the divided Corinthians of Paul's day and to the divided believers of ours, he writes by the Spirit: *"Is Christ divided? ... Are ye not carnal?"*

Strangely, this passage is often used against those who teach that saved Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians are *"one body in Christ"* (Rom. 12:5). It is used against them because they insist upon the great doctrine of the "one body" and its "one baptism" committed by revelation to the Apostle Paul. They, the very ones so fragmented by division, charge their opponents with making too much of Paul, claiming that the twelve apostles and Paul all proclaimed the same message, and that to teach otherwise is to foster a party spirit.

But such an interpretation of I Cor. 1:11-13 would be contrary to the context in *this same letter* from Paul, for in 4:16 he earnestly "beseeches" them *"Be ye followers of me."* Was he contradicting himself, or are some of our spiritual leaders confused as to his meaning?

Those who seek to evade the issue of I Cor. 1:11-13, and to escape Paul's withering rebuke of their sectarian divisions should ask themselves why Paul alone, beside our Lord on earth, says *"Follow me"* (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:6; II Thes. 3:7-9; etc). They should ask themselves why Paul alone speaks of "my gospel," "our gospel," *"that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles," "the gospel which was preached of me"* (Rom. 2:16; 16:25; I Cor. 15:1; II Cor. 4:3; Gal. 2:2; 1 Thes. 1:5; II Thes. 2:14; II Tim. 2:8; etc.). They should ask themselves why, at Jerusalem, he discussed his gospel *"privately"* with "those who were of reputation" (Gal. 2:2). They should ask themselves what he meant when he said:

*". . . I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles; I magnify mine office"* (Rom. 11:13).

They should ask themselves what the apostle meant when he wrote to the Gentile believers at Ephesus about:

". . . the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery" (Eph. 3:1-3).

Finally, they should ask themselves whether a change in dispensation did not occur when the other apostles and elders at Jerusalem shook hands with Paul and Barnabas in a solemn agreement, publicly recognizing Paul as now God's appointed apostle to the Gentiles, and binding themselves henceforth to confine their own ministry to Israel ([Gal. 2:9](#)).

Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians was the more fully justified because he was *God's chosen vessel* to proclaim the glorious message that in view of Israel's rejection of Messiah "*God [had] concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all,*"

"And that He might reconcile BOTH [believing Jews and Gentiles] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Rom. 11:32; Eph. 2:16, cf. [1 Cor. 12:13](#)).

**CHRISTIAN UNITY AND THE MYSTERY:** While the children of God are also the children of Adam, it is not strange that there should be disagreements and divisions among them. Yet there is nothing so apt to promote true unity among believers as a deep appreciation of the mystery proclaimed by Paul.

Imagine: if all the Fundamentalist believers in metropolitan Chicago alone should agree as one body on the *all-sufficiency* of our Lord's redemptive work, taking care not then to cast reflections on this all-sufficiency by *adding* some religious ordinance once required for salvation:<sup>13</sup> in a word, if all the Fundamentalists in metropolitan Chicago alone would consistently preach Jesus Christ "*according to the revelation of the mystery,*" what a powerful witness to Christ would emanate from this one area alone!

The Apostle Paul was not writing casually when he expressed his earnest desire for the saints:

"That their hearts might be comforted, *being knit together in love, and unto all the riches* of THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING: to the acknowledgment<sup>14</sup> of the mystery. (Col. 2:2).

**PAUL, BAPTISM, AND THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS:** *Vers. 14-18:* "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

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<sup>13</sup> Such as water baptism (Mark 1:4; 16:16; Acts 2:38).

<sup>14</sup> Gr., *epignosis*, "full knowledge."

"Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

"And I baptized also the household of Stephanus; besides I know not whether I baptized any other.

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

A QUESTION OF INSPIRATION: We come now to a strange phenomenon in the writings of Paul, for the above passage, perhaps as often as any other, is used to refute the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

First the apostle says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you *but Crispus and Gaius.*" Mark well, *none but these two.* Then, in Ver. 16 he adds, '*And I baptized also the household of Stephanus.*' Now that's different! First he *says two* and no more, and then adds a whole household! And this is not all, for now, becoming more cautious, he goes on to say, "*besides I know not whether I baptized any other*" (Ver. 16). This is passing strange. Lest we misunderstand him, let us get the whole picture in perspective simply thus:

1. I baptized "*none but*" Crispus and Gains (Vers. 14).
2. I baptized *also* the household of Stephanus (Ver. 16).
3. Besides these *I cannot recall* baptizing anybody else (Ver. 16).

This must sound strangely unlike divine inspiration to those who do not understand this mighty doctrine. But here we encounter the wonder of the inspired Word, for the Bible, the written Word of God, like Christ, the living Word, is wholly human *and* wholly divine.<sup>15</sup>

Paul wrote naturally as a man to his friends, not certain just how many of them he had baptized, though knowing it was not many. But this is also *God* speaking to *us* and telling us that water baptism was even then losing its importance.

THE SAVING POWER OF GOD: But *why* was Paul glad he had baptized only a few, and why was he not even sure just how many? We find the clear answer in the next verse:

"FOR CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE. BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. . . ." (Ver. 17).

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<sup>15</sup> See the Author's *Commentary on Romans*, Appendix No. II, on Divine Election and Human Responsibility.

And he then proceeds to show wherein lies the saving power of God:

"NOT WITH WISDOM OF WORDS, *LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST SHOULD BE MADE OF NONE EFFECT.*

"FOR *THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS IS TO THEM THAT PERISH FOOLISHNESS, BUT UNTO US WHICH ARE SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD*" (Vers. 17,18).

WAS PAUL SENT TO BAPTIZE? Many sincere believers have experienced grave problems with the passage we are considering. Especially difficult for them to accept is his statement in Ver. 17: "*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*" But is not water baptism part of the gospel? they ask. Is it possible that this was *not* part of his divine commission? Might he have meant that he was not sent *primarily* to baptize, but rather to preach the gospel?

Such questions as these have generally created more heat than light, with the result that the real issue has been beclouded and churches have suffered deep divisions over *who* should be baptized and *how*, when they should first have faced up to the basic question: "*Should we practice water baptism at all? Is it included in God's program for the present dispensation?*"

Let us then go to the Word for the answer to this first and most vital question, for the Bible does give light, clear light, on this subject.

1. *John the Baptist*, clearly, was sent to baptize, for in John 1:33 we find his words:

". . . He that sent me to baptize with water. . ."

2. *The twelve*, too, were sent to baptize, for in our Lord's commission to them He said:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, BAPTIZING THEM in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

Thus, not only did the twelve baptize when they labored with Christ on earth ([John 4:2](#)); they were later *sent* to teach *and to baptize* with a view to His departure from this earth. They began to carry out this commission at Pentecost, baptizing about three thousand of their hearers on that one day.

3. But as to Paul, there is not a vestige of evidence, and certainly not one clear statement in Scripture to the effect that *he* was sent to baptize.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM UNDER JOHN AND THE TWELVE: It should be carefully noted that from John's baptism right through Pentecost this rite was a

requirement "*for the remission of sins*" ([Mark 1:4](#); [16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#)). Also, it is significant that both Peter and Paul referred to "the baptism *which John preached*" ([Acts 10:37](#); [13:24](#)). The twelve also *preached baptism for the remission of sins* ([Acts 2:38](#)). How could Peter's words at Pentecost be interpreted otherwise, especially in the light of their background ([Mark 16:16](#)) and of the fact that he did not offer salvation by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Examine the sacred Record and see.

It is deplorable and reprehensible that some, "great theologians" among them, have altered the plain words of [Mark 16:16](#) to fit their "Christian baptism" theories, but the verse is clear enough - and consistent enough:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."<sup>16</sup>

We submit that to arbitrarily alter this passage to *make* it read that he who believes and is saved should *then* be baptized, is an abomination in the sight of God. Of any who do this we may reasonably ask, "What other important Scriptures will he alter next to make them fit into his line of teaching? What security do we have in relying on the Scriptures if every theologian can make them say what he thinks they *ought* to say?"

So important, then, was the religious rite of water baptism from John right through Pentecost. But here comes Paul, converted to Christ *after* Pentecost, entirely apart from the twelve and far away from Jerusalem. Where do we find one single sentence indicating that this *other* apostle was ever commissioned to baptize? NOWHERE!

Thus we have both negative and positive evidence that the risen, glorified Lord did *not* send Paul to baptize; that this was *not* part of his divine commission.

We have answered the objection that Paul did baptize some during his early ministry, but there is further light on this subject. He also spoke with tongues, healed the sick, cast out demons and circumcised Timothy. Shall we practice all of these? No, for all these belonged to the dispensation under which he was saved and from which he gradually emerged as the Lord appeared to him in one revelation after another ([Acts 26:16](#); [II Cor. 12:1](#)).

Another argument for baptism which is sometimes advanced is that the apostle had personally baptized so few only because he wanted no part in the divisions at Corinth, or lest some of them should say that he had baptized in his own name, i.e., by his own authority. This argument breaks down, however, because had he, like John and the twelve been *sent* by God to baptize, it would have been *wrong* for him, under any circumstances, to fail to baptize, and still more wrong to *rejoice* that

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<sup>16</sup> Those who did not believe, of course, would hardly be baptized. Hence the omission of the word "baptized" in the second clause.

he had baptized so few. And further, the divisions referred to in this passage took place considerably *after* his departure from them.

#### THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS THE POWER OF GOD:

How many believers there are who can readily quote I Cor. 1:18, but how few ever quote Verses 17 and 18 *together!* That they *belong together* is certain, for as surely as the connective "for" in Ver. 17 sends us back to the preceding verses, so surely the connective "for" in Ver. 18 sends us back to Ver. 17:

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST SHOULD BE MADE OF NONE EFFECT.

"FOR THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS IS to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is THE POWER OF GOD."

How clearly this brings out the fact that Paul's "gospel of the grace of God" is based on the mighty accomplishments of Calvary! The apostle would have *nothing*; neither a religious rite, nor the "wisdom of words" detract from this message, for in the Cross lay the power of salvation. Why? Because the cross proclaims God's *righteousness* (as well as His love) in *paying the just penalty for our sins*. This is beautifully brought out in Rom. 1:16,17, where the apostle declares that he is proud (unashamed) of the gospel of Christ because "*therein is the righteousness of God revealed.*"

As we have pointed out, the *love* of God was also revealed in "the preaching of the cross," and for this the apostle was profoundly grateful, but what made him so *proud* of the gospel was that God's *righteousness* (Lit., *rightness*) was revealed therein. (Cf. [Gal. 6:14](#)).

Paul did not go to the lost and say, "Repent and be baptized and God will forgive you." He rather said in effect: "I have good news for you! Your sins have all been paid for! Believe, be saved, and rejoice!" This is grace indeed.

Here the reader should ponder on such passages of Scripture as II Tim. 2:4-7; Heb. 2:9 and I John 2:2, which *explicitly state* that Christ died for all, and thus prove "*the gospel of the grace of God*" to be an *indiscriminate* offer of salvation by grace through faith.

THE WORD AT WORK: To the perishing the preaching of the cross is, sadly, "foolishness," but "*unto us which are saved it is the power<sup>17</sup> of God.*" Thus Paul could later write to the Colossian believers:

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<sup>17</sup> Gr., *dunamis*, from which our "dynamite."

". . . the gospel ... is come unto you as it is in all the world, *and bringeth forth fruit*, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Col. 1:5,6).

Wherever "the gospel of the grace of God" and its "preaching of the cross"<sup>18</sup> is proclaimed in power it bears fruit. Paul had never even seen the Colossians. He had only sent missionaries to them from Ephesus, but *it had worked!* No one hearing that message can go away the same. Either he will consider it foolishness, rebel against it, and be hardened, or he will be convicted by it, believe it, and be saved. Ultimately that message will either condemn or save him for all eternity, depending upon his rejection or acceptance of it.

Mark well: it is "the preaching of the cross" that produces these results. The Law of Moses never did.

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all *that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*" (Acts 13:38, 39; cf. [Rom. 8:3,4](#)).

THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD: Vers. 19-25: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.

"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

The above challenge was hurled at the intellectual world of nineteen hundred years ago, so famous for its philosophy, literature and art. Nor are these the words of one who himself lacked the benefits of higher learning. Rather, they flowed from the pen of one of the greatest thinkers of all time: *the Apostle Paul*. More than this,

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<sup>18</sup> The "preaching of the cross" is the very foundation of the gospel of the grace of God."

they are found in that Book of books, *the Bible*, which has withstood, not barely but magnificently, all the attacks of a thousand critics through centuries of time.

Many believers have a complex about their Christian convictions and speak of them apologetically when face to face with "the wise of this world." These timid ones should ponder carefully over the above challenge.

The wisdom of this world is self-defeating. Consider some of the results of our modern achievements: We can now kill each other faster and in much greater numbers. We have produced so much pollution that we are choking ourselves to death. From glass bottles and tin cans to poisonous waste: where can we put it all? We can fly from New York to San Francisco in a few hours - but not like birds! We make so much noise and commotion in doing so that innocent people - and sick people - for miles around our larger airports are kept awake at night when they ought to be resting peacefully. We could go on and on about our various branches of modern science and describe how unhappy they are making this already-troubled world.<sup>19</sup>

But not only is this world's wisdom self-destructive: *God* is destroying it (Ver. 19) and has demonstrated its folly (Ver. 20). How? By "*the preaching of the cross.*" This mighty message has eased troubled hearts, rolled away the sinner's guilt, replaced sorrow and despair with joy and peace, given assurance of salvation and, most important of all, has vindicated God in justifying guilty sinners who trust in Christ for salvation (Rom. 3:25,26).

While, in the wisdom of God, He did not *allow* the world to discover Him by its wisdom, it pleased Him "by the foolishness of [the] preaching<sup>20</sup> to save them that believe" (Ver. 21).

"The Jews," says Ver. 22, "require a sign." They want to see a demonstration of *power*, while the Greeks "seek after *wisdom.*" And *on these bases* they reject Christ. But to us who are saved Christ crucified, is "the *power* of God and the *wisdom* of God" (Ver. 24).

THE CROSS, THE JEW AND THE GREEK: The preaching of the cross *embarrasses* the Jew. To Him, Christ crucified is a constant "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." He complains with his fathers, "*Ye intend to bring this man's blood upon us*" (Acts 5:28), even though his fathers, only a few days before had cried out in unison, "*His blood be on us and on our children*" (Matt. 27:25).

But to the Greeks, the literate Gentiles, "the preaching of the cross" is *foolishness* (Ver. 23). They laugh and say, "He could not save Himself; how could He save others? He could not save them by His life; how could He save them by His death?" However, what seems so foolish and illogical to them is to us the sublimest

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<sup>19</sup> See the Author's *No Other Doctrine*, Chapter III.

<sup>20</sup> I.e., "the preaching of the cross." *Textus Receptus* contains the definite article.

logic. We are proud of our great Savior; we love and worship Him, because He did not save Himself, but died in agony and disgrace so that He might save us, for "Christ died for our sins" and because He paid the penalty in full God is now "just-and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Thus "Christ crucified" is "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (Ver. 23-25).

The passage we have been considering, then, should encourage timid believers not to stand in awe of the world's wisdom.

Generally speaking, the "intellectuals" in any age are those who assent to the theories of those who agree with each other that they are intellectual. Dissent from them and you have automatically branded yourself an illiterate. But their "wisdom" should not intimidate us, for the powerful gospel we proclaim can, and does, accomplish what the wisest and greatest of them cannot. Indeed, they themselves are so lacking in normal intelligence that they go on through life thinking great thoughts and doing great things without even stopping to ask themselves: "What about me? I am growing older; soon I will die - and then, what will become of me?" They are so foolish as to neglect, and even reject, any direct information they might find on the subject. And these are *intellectuals*?

For ourselves, we cannot thank God enough for the day we heard and believed "the preaching of the cross." At one time the types and predictions of the cross were couched in veiled phraseology - purposely so. Our Lord did not even begin to tell His apostles about it until near the close of His ministry ([Matt. 16:21](#); [Luke 18:34](#)) and then they did not even understand it. Even in early Acts the crucifixion is spoken of only as a matter of shame to be repented of. But with Paul the blood, the death, and the cross of Christ suddenly become the great theme of God's good news to a lost world. He constantly speaks of it, not in hidden meanings, but in open declaration.

And as we consider the cross in the light of the Pauline revelation it becomes the emblem of a thousand victories; the symbol of all our blessed Lord has done for us and is to us. More and more Scriptures crowd the scene! A score of glorious hymns come to mind! We would quote and consider all the Scriptures and many of the hymns if only there were space in this volume!

"Well, the delightful day will come!" - and when it does, depend upon it, the glory of believers will still be "all the cross"; our song: what He has done for us in His wondrous love. As we look forward to it we say with Addison:

Through all eternity to Thee  
A grateful song I'll raise,  
For, oh, eternity's too short  
To utter all Thy praise.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: *Vers. 26-31*: For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

"That no flesh should glory in His presence.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Because of our opposition to the doctrine of so-called "Limited Atonement," some have concluded that we deny the sovereignty of God and the Bible doctrine of election. This is by no means so, as we have explained in the *Appendix* of our commentary on *Romans*.

Romans 9 is a great chapter on the sovereignty of God. So is Ephesians 1. Still another is I Corinthians 1, but this last, we feel, is too often overlooked in this connection.

Romans 9 *explains* the sovereignty of God *theologically*, Ephesians 1 *extols the glory of it*, and I Corinthians I *demonstrates it practically*.

I Corinthians 1 begins very much like the opening verses of most of Paul's other epistles, but its emphasis on the sovereignty of God increases as we proceed through to the end of the chapter, and especially from Ver. 19 on. Note in these verses the increasing emphasis on the sovereignty of God:

Ver. 19: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise....."

Ver. 20: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Ver. 21: "... after that *in the wisdom of God* the world by wisdom knew not God, *it pleased God* by the foolishness of [the] preaching to save them that believe."

Ver. 24: "... unto *them which are called*."

Ver. 26: "... ye see your *calling*, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh . . . *are called*;

Ver. 27,28: ". . . *God hath chosen . . . God hath chosen . . . God [hath] chosen . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence*."

ANY-MANY: Five classes of people are referred to in Vers. 26-28, as those whom God saves and uses: the "foolish," the "weak," the "base," those who are "despised," and those who "are not," i.e., the "nobodies." These He deliberately *chooses* and uses to "confound the wise," and "the mighty," and "*to bring to nought the things that are*."

The neo-evangelicals of the past few decades have decried the lack of intellectual acumen among most Fundamentalists, and have gone "all out" to win intellectuals and others among the world's great ones to Christ. They have made the Church a shambles, weakening its testimony as the number of "converts" is increased. They should rather thank God, as our Lord did, that He has "*hidden these things from the wise and prudent*" and has "*revealed them unto babes*" (Matt. 11:25). If the wise, the mighty and the noble had a monopoly on salvation, how little glory would go to God!

The humblest believer in Christ has all he needs to stand before God "accepted" and "complete," for Ver. 30 of our passage says:

"But of Him are *ye in Christ Jesus*, who of God is *made unto us* wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (Cf. [Eph. 1:6](#); [Col. 2:9,10](#)).

It should be noted, however, that even the rich, the great and the noble are not *deprived* of salvation. The passage does not say "not *any*," but "not *many*." Thank God that there are some, though comparatively few, among great statesmen, noted intellectuals and powerful money magnates of this world, who do trust Christ as their Savior and have been mightily used of Him.

Note further that God does not merely *bear with* common people; He has *chosen* such to be instruments of glory in His hand. God's point in Vers. 26-29 is: "Most of you are ordinary people; few are from the so-called upper classes."

This is not because the wise man is *automatically deprived* of salvation just because he is wise, or the mighty man for the power he wields, or the nobleman because he was born of princely parentage, any more than that the uneducated, the weak, the base, the despised, and the "nobodies" are *automatically saved* because they are uneducated, weak, base, despised or unrecognized. Generally the "great" shut *themselves* out by their pride, for such are usually *the last to bow before God*, acknowledging their *sins* and their need of Christ, and until they do,

*God will not have them.* This was the case with the rich young ruler of our Lord's day ([Mark 10:22,23](#)). It was also the case with "intellectual" Capernaum ([Matt. 11:23,25](#)).

Thus the great of this world ought to seek the more earnestly to have the *right attitude* before God, for *God will not tolerate* boasters in His presence (See [Psa. 8:2](#); [138:6](#); [Dan. 4:37](#); [Jas. 4:6](#); [I Pet. 5:5,6](#)).

Here we would say to the unsaved: If you want to be saved from the just penalty of your sins, remember this: there is one thing that God, the Judge of all, expects from you. He expects you to stop saying things in your own defense. It is not sin that keeps men out of heaven; it is their attitude. God in His infinite love has made full provision for sin. He paid its penalty Himself. But He has made no provision for a self-righteous attitude.

Sometimes the defendant comes to the place where his attorney advises him: "It will be to your advantage to plead guilty and throw yourself upon the mercy of the court." This is exactly our position-even the position of the rich and great who have not yet trusted Christ as their Savior. Keep defending yourself and you will *never* be saved, but throw yourself upon the mercy of God and He will graciously forgive and justify you through Christ. This is why Paul exclaimed to one of his Jewish audiences:

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ] is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins*; and by Him all that believe are *justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" ([Acts 13:38,39](#)).

One more thing should be said about the Spirit's use of the word "many," rather than the word "any," in [I Cor. 1:26](#). Does this fact not clearly imply that those of the wise, the mighty and the noble, who *are* saved should be the more grateful, and should give themselves and all they have the more unreservedly to the service of Christ? Indeed, some of these (though still a small minority), have been greatly used of God for the furtherance of the cause of Christ. May God use increasing numbers of them to help in the propagation of the pure, undiluted, "*gospel of the grace of God*," and "*the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*" ([Acts 20:24](#); [Rom. 16:25](#)).

Paul's "charge" to rich believers of his day was not made for mercenary reasons, for he wrote by divine inspiration, so that well-off believers today do well to take heed:

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, *that they may lay hold on eternal life*" (I Tim. 6:17-19; cf. [Phil. 3:12-14](#) where "apprehend" has the same sense as "lay hold" above.)

To possess eternal life is blessed indeed but to "lay hold" on eternal life experientially is that for which Christ in His grace "laid hold" on us (Phil. 3:12). No richer experience is possible.

## CHAPTER II

### *I Corinthians 2:1-16*

THE WISDOM OF MEN AND THE POWER OF GOD: I Cor. 2:1-5: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

The Greeks at Corinth were taken up with the conflicting philosophies of the "intellectuals" of their day, mainly because this gave *them* an air of intellectualism - and they did want to be "wise," as we read in I Cor. 1:22.

However, when Paul, a truly learned man, came to them, he did not seek to win them with "excellency of speech or of wisdom," but with the mighty *truth* of his God-given message about Christ crucified. What James calls "great swelling words of man's wisdom" meant nothing to Paul. He knew and proclaimed "*the truth of the gospel.*"

He declares in 1:17 that Christ had sent him to "preach the gospel, *not* with wisdom of *words*, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

How *words* can make a man appear profound-and hide either his ignorance or his dishonesty! Thus we must often pray that God will help us to present His message in language that all can understand, so that the truth may be clarified rather than beclouded.

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD: *I Cor. 2:1*: Some have held that the word "testimony" here is really the Greek word *musterion*, or "mystery." This would fit nicely with Ver. 7, where Paul does indeed refer to the mystery, but we must not let the wish be father to the thought when studying the Scriptures. We must go by *what God says*, not by what we would like Him to say in His Word. In this case the *Received Text*, plus half a dozen other Greek texts - *including* Nestle's - contain the word *marturion* (testimony), not *musterion* (mystery), and the context bears this out.

First, a thoughtful reading of Vers. 6, 7 indicates that the apostle *introduces* the subject of the mystery *at that point*. Second, in Ver. 1 he is evidently saying that

he was not using oratory or eloquence to convince his hearers, but rather was simply *bearing witness*. This agrees with 1:6, where the apostle states: ". . . *the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.*" He had told them about Christ, they had believed his testimony, and what he had said had proved to be true. As they acted on his testimony, this had been confirmed *in them*. They had been saved and their lives revolutionized.

In other words, he is saying, "I didn't come to you with excellency of speech or of wisdom; I simply *bore witness* to what I *knew* to be the *truth*." As we know, testimony is not to be based on what one thinks, but on what he has *seen or heard*. Thus, when the glorified Lord appeared to Paul, He said: "*Thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard*" (Acts 22:15).

Perhaps the reader will recall the narrative in Acts 4, where Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin for healing the lame man without proper "authority." Peter's defense before the Sanhedrin was devastating, with the result that:

"When they [the rulers] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Mark well, the rulers were not impressed with the apostles' oratory, for the passage states: "They saw the *boldness* of Peter and John, and perceived that they were *unlearned and ignorant* men" (in the sense that they were not formally educated).

The apostles had claimed to have *seen* and *been with* their risen Lord, and now this boldness of testimony, coming from men obviously uneducated, convinced their rulers in their hearts and consciences that the apostles had indeed been with Christ since His crucifixion and that therefore He must have risen from the dead and must be alive.

This is the kind of testimony that Paul bore, even though *he* was a *very* learned man. He well knew that one ounce of honest testimony is worth more than a pound of oratory. We who stand in the pulpit today do well to bear this always in mind.

**NOTHING BUT CHRIST CRUCIFIED:** I Cor. 2:2: The apostle surely did not mean to imply here that he did not preach the *burial and resurrection* of Christ among the Corinthians, but these are implied in "the preaching of the cross," for otherwise our Lord's death could not be of saving value to us. But he calls his message, again and again, the preaching of the *cross*, because it was by *the payment of the penalty* for our sins that our salvation was secured.

Some have concluded from I Cor. 15:3 that "the preaching of the cross," is a *prophesied* gospel and that Paul, like the twelve, at first proclaimed a prophetic message. However, this passage does not say that Paul's message was a

fulfillment of prophecy, but merely that the crucifixion of Christ for our sins was in *accordance with* the prophetic Word. In other words, we can now look back to the Old Testament Scriptures and see that God had this in mind all the while, though nowhere in prophecy does He *clearly state* that Messiah, or the Son of God, would die for the sins of the world. Even in Isaiah 53 the words of the Hebrew prophet are "all *we*," and "*us all*," and "for the transgressions of *my people* was He stricken" (Isa. 53:6,8). Moreover, a careful examination of the chapter will show that the general sense is that Christ was to die *on account of* Israel's sins.

Thus Paul's message that "Christ died *for our sins*" was part of his unique commission. Indeed, he calls it "*the gospel which I preached unto you*" and says, "I delivered unto you first of all *that which I also received*" (I Cor. 15:1-3). This is phraseology which he commonly uses in connection with the special revelation committed to him.

Certainly it was not the same message which the twelve had been sent to preach under the so-called "great commission." At Pentecost, under this commission, Peter had *accused* his hearers of crucifying Christ, and when some were convicted and asked, "*What shall we do?*" he did not say, "Christ died for your sins; trust in Him and you will be saved." He rather said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

The preaching of the cross, then, was indeed part of Paul's special commission. In fact it was the *essential* part, around which all else revolved, for there is not one blessing peculiar to the Church today, which does not find its root in "Christ, and Him crucified."

*Justification (Rom. 5:9), redemption and the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), reconciliation (Rom. 5:10; II Cor. 5:20,21), our oneness with Christ (Rom. 6:3; Eph. 2:13), the truth of the "one Body" (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:16), our "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3,7), the rapture of the Church to be with Christ (I Thes. 4:14-18): every one of these blessings, and more, come to us only because the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died for us at Calvary.*

All this, then finds its root in "the preaching of the cross," only the condition of the Corinthians led Paul to determine that *among them* (note the words, "among you") he could not go into the ramifications, i.e., all that the cross had accomplished for us, but rather would stay close to the basis of this glorious message: "*Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*"

Corinth was the "fun capital" of the world, and its inhabitants had a tendency to be immature. This is why Paul, as he indicates in I Cor. 2:6,7, could not teach them the glories of the mystery. It was better to show them mainly how Christ had paid the full penalty for their sins, and their responsibilities to Him and each other in the light of that fact.

But while he preached only "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," to the congregation as a whole, he did "speak wisdom" to those among them who were spiritually mature, but he hastens to explain, "not the wisdom of this world" (Ver. 6).

HUMAN WEAKNESS AND DIVINE POWER: Vers. 3-5: Paul was by no means desirous to let people know how profoundly intellectual he was, or even how strong in character. Indeed, he says in Ver. 3 of our text:

"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

This was a simple statement of fact, for at Corinth the tension had been so great, and the dangers so ominous, that the Lord Himself had appeared to him in a vision by night to encourage him, and to exhort him:

"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10).

With this assurance he had continued at Corinth for a year and six months, and was mightily used there.

Believers who are prone to fear in witnessing for Christ will be encouraged to consider Paul's fear at Corinth and his request for earnest prayer for boldness in Eph. 6:18-20:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints:

*"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,*

*"For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."*

May we learn the lesson, so that without pretense we may simply *bear witness* to the truth of God, that He may use our testimony for the salvation and blessing of others, that their faith "might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in *the power of God.*"

THE WISDOM OF GOD - THE MYSTERY: Vers. 6-8: As we have said, Paul did "speak wisdom" to the more mature, but he hastens to add: *"yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought"* (Ver. 6). What "wisdom," then, did he proclaim? His answer follows in Ver. 7. To grasp its meaning more clearly, however, we should read it as it is in the *Received Text*. Here the Greek, which the KJV translators rendered in English, actually reads: *"But we speak wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory."* This is doubtless more correct, for a careful reading

of Ver. 7 in the *King James Version* will reveal that the words "even" and "wisdom" are printed in *italics*, which they, the KJV translators, used to indicate words which *they* supplied to make the meaning more clear. In this case, however, it should be remembered that these great men were barely emerging from the dark ages, before the great truth of the mystery had as yet been recovered. Thus they naturally supposed that Paul referred to hidden *wisdom* rather than to the fact that it was the "mystery" (note the *preceding word* is "mystery") which had been hidden - as he himself so often indicates elsewhere in his writings (See [Rom. 16:25](#); [Eph. 3:5,9](#); [Col. 1:26](#); *et al*).

Thus it was the great revelation of the mystery which Paul proclaimed to the more mature. And, he says, the proclamation of this great message was "ordained before the world for ages] unto *our glory*." This harmonizes with half a dozen other Pauline declarations about the mystery, but especially with Col. 1:27, where he says that God would have His saints know what is "*the riches of the glory of this mystery*. . . ."

This agrees too with Ver. 8 where, referring back to the "wisdom" of "the princes of this world," he says that *they* knew nothing of this, for "*had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*." He does not make this statement in defense of those who crucified Christ, of course. They *knew* at the very least that they were condemning an innocent man to death, and after they had crucified Him they knew that He was indeed the Christ (See [John 8:28](#)). Rather the apostle makes this statement to point out that had these princes known about the mystery at the time and had therefore not crucified Christ, the mystery-God's eternal purpose in the crucifixion, could not have been accomplished, much less revealed. Therefore God let them crucify His beloved Son without letting them know beforehand His purpose in permitting this.

THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD: *Vers. 9-13*: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, *the deep things of God*.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

The "*excellency of speech*" and the "*persuasive words of man's wisdom*" of *Vers. 1-8*, stand in sharp contrast to the simple testimony Paul bore-and to the spiritual

power it wielded. But it also stands in contrast to *"the deep things of God"* discussed in Vers. 9-13. How shallow and frivolous are "the words which man's wisdom teacheth" compared to the profound truths of *"the deep things of God"*!

Ver. 9 is taken from Isa. 64:4. It is not an exact quotation, nor does Isa. 64:4 refer directly to the mystery, but *these words* could surely be used as to God's secret purpose for us. Truly, "as it is written," no one could ever have imagined the glorious things held in store for those to whom Paul wrote.

Some have supposed that Paul here refers to "the things which God hath prepared" *in heaven* for those who love Him. But this is patently incorrect, for the apostle goes on to say, *"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit..."* (Ver. 10).

Actually, Vers. 10-13 explain more clearly than any other Scripture passage why it is that believers can understand - to whatever extent - the truth of Scripture, while to unbelievers the Word of God is simply incomprehensible -except where simple technical matters or broad moral precepts are concerned.

Thus the apostle refers, not to the things which God hath prepared for us in heaven, but to the things He prepared for us in "His eternal purpose," *"kept secret since the world began"* (Rom. 16:25), *"hid from ages and from generations"* (Col. 1:26), until they were revealed to the Apostle Paul by direct revelation from the glorified Christ, and now revealed unto us *by the Spirit* (Ver. 10 above, and cf. [Eph. 3:5](#)).

In review: Ver. 7 declares that this "mystery" was *"ordained before the world unto our glory."* Eph. 1:7-9 says that "the riches of God's grace ... has *abounded toward us* in all wisdom and prudence, [God] *having made known unto us the mystery of His will. . . .*" And Col. 1:27 declares that God would have His saints know *"what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles....."*

Little wonder Dr. H. A. Ironside called this glorious revelation "the diadem of divine truth," and "the lost precious gem" of Scripture, for as the Corinthians were too immature, spiritually, to grasp the significance of this great revelation, the Church as a whole soon lost sight of it and accepted in its place a formal religion with ordinances elevated to the place of mysteries, as in heathen rites, with "the mystery" itself lost to multitudes. This is why Dr. Ironside points out in his *Mysteries of God* that while much of the foregoing is to be found in the writings of both the pre- and post-Nicene fathers, in those by Roman Catholic authors and even in the literature of the Reformation, scarcely a reference can be found to *"the mystery,"* which was so unspeakably precious to Paul. And there has been no great change since then.

How much the Apostle Paul has to say about this "mystery," or secret, in his epistles, yet how little do we find about it in most of the commentaries written on these very books! Surely there is no excuse for this, when the Holy Spirit is as

ready today as He ever was to reveal to us "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

In Gal. 1 and 2 Paul "certifies" the fact that he had received his message, not from men, nor by man, but directly from the Lord Jesus Christ (1:11,12), and shows how, upon his revealing it to the leaders at Jerusalem, they "saw" and "perceived" (2:7,9). How? *By the Spirit,*" as we have seen above. And this is how we "see" and "perceive" the truths of God's Word today.

Paul made his message known to the Jerusalem leaders "*by the Spirit,*" and they comprehended it "*by the Spirit.*" Now, of course, it is *by the Scriptures* that these truths are made known, and the divine author of the Scriptures is *the Holy Spirit*. Thus by the Scriptures the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins and convinces us of salvation through Christ. Nor does the Spirit work in the hearts of men apart from the Word; the same Spirit who speaks to us through His Word, works in our hearts to convict and convert us ([Rom. 10:14,17](#); [1 Pet. 1:23-25](#)).

And so in Ver. 11 of the above passage, the question is asked and answered:

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man, which is in him?"

What earnest discussions the translators of the *King James Version must have had regarding this verse,*<sup>21</sup> at least if the wide disagreement on this passage in commentaries is any indication of the difficulties they encountered.

The word "man" (Gr., *anthropos*) occurs three times in this one verse, but a problem arises at the words, "what man," for as we consider the sense of the passage it appears that Paul had more than the human race in view. Rather he appears to be comparing man with any of the *so-called* animal creation about him. Otherwise the "even so" in this statement can have no meaning; there would be no parallel, for in the latter part he compares man with God. As only man can understand "the things of a man," so only God can understand "the things of God"- or he who has the Spirit of God within him.

We have heard dog lovers and horse lovers exclaim, "how well that animal understands me!" But a dog, or cat, or horse, or cow, cannot *really* understand "the things of a man."

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<sup>21</sup> Concerning the original manuscripts we read in I Pet. 1:21 that "*holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,*" but the men of God who translated the Scriptures into English were not thus supernaturally inspired. Indeed their appointed task was the *joint consideration* of the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures from the manuscripts and texts that they had at their disposal. And when they had finished they freely acknowledged that they had *not* produced a *perfect* translation. However, we should be profoundly grateful that these devoted men were signally *aided* by the Holy Spirit and produced a translation which towers head and shoulders above all the rest, and certainly stands as a rebuke to the many corrupt translations that have appeared on the scene in our day.

Here is a man, let us say, who has just been bereaved of his wife of 40 years. And this just when he has been troubled by financial reverses and his health has declined. There he sits, in his living room chair, brooding-just looking into space. His dog, reacting instinctively, lies down at his side, also just looking into space. But the dog does not *really* understand anything about human bereavement and all its complications, nor about financial problems or infirmity. Why is this? Because he does not possess "the spirit of a man." But another *man* can understand and sympathize. He can understand - to whatever *extent* - "the things of a man" because he possesses "the spirit of man."

Note carefully: it does not say that one man can understand another. Such a statement would at least have to be qualified. Rather it says that he can understand "the things of a man," i.e., the things that pertain to man.

And "*even so*," says the same verse, "*the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*" As great as is the gulf between the animal kingdom and man, so great, and greater, is the gulf between man and God. Ah, but if a man receives *the Spirit of God* it is a different matter altogether. Thus Ver. 12 goes on to say of believers in Christ:

"But we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD."

In other words, the divinely-renewed spirit in the believer responds to the Spirit of God in the Word of God, so that we may rejoice as "the Spirit itself [Himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children<sup>22</sup> of God" (Rom. 8:16) – and more, for, comparing Scripture with Scripture and his own special revelation from heaven ("spiritual things with spiritual") the apostle shows us those precious things "freely given to us of God" (Vers. 12,13).

What a blessing it is when a man, who naturally best understands "the things of a man," comes to know God too, and to understand "the things of God"!

We observed a striking example of this years ago when we visited an old friend, Ole Olson, "out on the farm." Ole's dear friend Olaf Johnson, had just been bereft of his wife and was feeling the loss deeply. Together we went to give him what comfort and encouragement we could. Presently, during our visit, Ole, a towering Swede with a strong, bass voice, stepped over to Olaf's side and, kneeling beside him, held one of his hands and began to sing:

There's one who can comfort when all else fails:  
Jesus, blessed Jesus!  
A Savior who saves, though the foe assails:  
Jesus, blessed Jesus!

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<sup>22</sup> Gr., *tekna*, born ones.

Once He traveled the way we go;  
Felt the pangs of defeat and woe.  
Who more perfectly then can know,  
Than Jesus, blessed Jesus!

It seems as if the author can still hear Olaf responding in his Swedish accent. "Dat vas vary comforting, Ole, vary comforting! How tankful ve should be dat ve know Christ!"

Ole and Olaf, dear brethren in Christ, could thus respond to each other, not only regarding "the things of a man," but also regarding "the things of God," since both possessed within them, not only "the spirit of man," but also "the Spirit of God." How gloriously different was their experience from that of the unsaved who are bereaved of loved ones, and of the poor lost souls who try to comfort them!

THE NATURAL MAN AND "HE THAT IS SPIRITUAL": *Vers. 14-16*: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"But he that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth] all things, yet he himself is judged [discerned] of no man.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

The meaning of this passage is clear. The natural man, i.e., man as he is, unregenerated and without the Spirit of God in him, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," indeed, "they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know<sup>23</sup> them, because they are *spiritually* discerned." The instructed Christian has only to listen to a panel of religious men of the world discussing "the things of God" to witness their abysmal ignorance of spiritual things.

But "he that is spiritual," the regenerated man, who has the Spirit of God within him, and walks in the Spirit, discerns "all things, though he himself is discerned of no man." He understands the lost about him, and carnal Christians too, but they never quite understand him. Moreover, he understands and rejoices in "*the things of the Spirit of God*" (Ver. 14), yes "*the deep things of God*" (Ver. 10).

THE BEST PSYCHIATRIST: It should be pointed out that the great increase in mental and emotional disorders which has plagued society for several decades has been concurrent with a *diminishing* emphasis on obedience to God and His Word and an *increased* emphasis on modern philosophy and psychology, with humanism dominating the scene. This is the situation that the above passage from I Cor. 2 combats.

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<sup>23</sup> In the sense of *understanding* them.

Among the various branches of psychology, psychiatry has doubtless received the widest attention for the last half century, not because psychiatrists have accomplished so much or have rendered their services so selflessly, but because the felt need for them is so great.

The simple fact is that most psychiatrists are unsaved men, blinded by "the god of this world" to the most important facts of life (II Cor. 4:3,4). In many cases they themselves have been plagued with the same problems for which they are now treating others. How then, can a Christ-rejecting, spiritually-blinded psychiatrist really give the best advice to a disturbed Christian - or indeed, to anyone?

True, the same causes generally produce the same effects, and as a *man* the psychiatrist can relate to some extent to "the things of a man," but it is also true that "man looketh on the outward appearance" - at what he observes, is told, etc., while "*the Lord looketh upon the heart*" (I Sam. 16:7). He alone can "*discern the thoughts and intents [motives] of the heart, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*" (Heb. 4:12,13).

Dr. Harry A. Ironside once told of a teenager who was deeply convicted about his sins and was afraid he would be lost forever. His unsaved parents, thinking he was "getting religious" and losing his sanity, took him to a psychiatrist. After a private talk with the boy, the psychiatrist advised his parents to try to help him get his mind off himself by getting him started, perhaps, with violin lessons or some such thing. We can still hear Dr. Ironside denouncing: "Imagine! prescribing violin lessons for a troubled soul!"

This leads us to a further observation. Many a Christian pastor or counsellor will advise the disturbed believer to consult a good *Christian* psychiatrist. But even this is not the best advice, for comparatively few Christians are *spiritual* men of God and, as we have seen, it is "the spiritual man" who "discerneth all things" and can give the *best* counsel to one who is troubled, mentally or emotionally. Sad to say, Christian psychiatrists in general are slow to discuss such subjects as *sin, Christ and salvation* with their patients. They deal with the "branches" of their patients' problems but do not get at the root. And when "successful" in their efforts the result, too often, is a "successful" patient rather than one who daily pleads with God to make him what he ought to be.

Some years ago a Christian brother fell into deep, horrible sin, and was held in prison under heavy bail, awaiting trial. Since he was a believer, a friend and I felt it was our Christian responsibility to go and help him spiritually if we could. But - a Christian psychiatrist had gotten there first and had explained to his wife, right in his presence, that he just needed to understand that he was ill, and that with proper psychiatric help he could be restored.

Indeed this man *was* sick, but it was not sickness that had caused his sin; *it was his sin that had caused his sickness*. Any of us would have been sick, living the life of vile immorality he had been living. How much better it would have been for him had the psychiatrist talked with him about his sin, God's attitude toward it, and how to be restored. How much better if this sin-laden man had been brought to his knees, pouring out his heart in grief and contrition to God! This would have done much more to lift the fallen brother than the advice the psychiatrist had given (See [Psa. 32:3-6](#)).

We are not attacking psychiatrists, but surely if any Christian aspires to be a psychiatrist he had better be sure that he has gained an intimate knowledge of the Word and daily walks close to God. The Bible, which deals so largely with the inner man, declares that "the spiritual man" is head and shoulders above others where *discernment* is concerned. He sees the facade of human pride and pretense, and even sees this tendency in himself, and recognizes that *sin* is the root of all our troubles. And he knows the remedies too. He has learned them from the Word of God and from personal experience in taking God at His Word. Yes, he is the man to go to when troubled in heart or mind. The spiritual man of God is the *best* psychiatrist.

JOYOUS CONCLUSION: This passage in I Cor. 2, specifically states that believers have received the Spirit of God *that they might know "the things that are freely given to us of God"; "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."* This is why the Scriptures and especially the mystery revealed through Paul, have become so precious to those who receive them as God's Word, sincerely endeavoring to "rightly divide" them, and so come to know more of Christ, searching their contents as a man searching for gold.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?" Ah, "but we *have* the mind of Christ" (Ver. 16). We have the mind of Christ because the Spirit dwells within us and it has always been the work of the Spirit to glorify Christ (John 16:13,14, *et al*).

## CHAPTER III

### *I Corinthians 3:1-23*

THE CAUSE, EVIDENCES AND RESULTS OF RETARDED GROWTH:  
Vers. 1-4:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

"For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

TERMS DEFINED: Before going into this passage let us define some of its terms: (1) The term "*spiritual*" is applied to those who not only *possess* the Spirit, but who "*walk in the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:16). (2) "*Carnal*": *Gr., sarkikos*, denotes walking after the "*flesh*," i.e., controlled by the animal appetites, governed by human nature. (3) "*Milk*": teachings easy to digest, spiritually. (4) "*Meat*": solid food (See [Matt. 3:4; 9:10](#); *et al*). (5) "*Bear*": Note "*to bear it*" in 3:2 is in italics (supplied by the translators to make the sense). "Bear" is old English used metaphorically here of keeping food down or digesting it.

FOUR CLASSES OF MEN: I Corinthians 2 and 3 deal with four classes of men into which the Bible divides the human race spiritually: the *natural* man (2:14), the *babe* in Christ (3:1), the *carnal*, or fleshly, Christian (3:1) and the *spiritual* man of God (2:15).

In 3:1-4 the apostle deals with the *carnal* Christian, for this is what the Corinthian believers, as a whole, were. Ver. 1 bears special attention:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual [men], but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ."

Note the words "*could not*." Why could he not? Ver. 3 supplies the answer: "Ye are *yet carnal*." The word "yet," indicates that they had been believers for some time, but had not grown, spiritually, thus had to be dealt with as "babes in Christ" (Ver. 1).

This "yet" reminds us of Heb. 5:12, where Paul writes to the Hebrew believers:

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat."

The Corinthians fell into this same category. By now they should have been teachers of the Word, spiritual men of God, but they had not grown. Had they been new believers, babes in Christ, there would have been some excuse for their condition, but though believers for some years now, they simply had not grown, so Paul had to deal with them as though they were still babes.

Thus we learn that those who, though born of the Spirit, do not grow spiritually are called "carnal" Christians and must be dealt with as babes in Christ. This casts light upon the fact that in this letter the apostle had to continue along the line indicated in 2:2, for the carnal Christian, like the babe in Christ, can take in the fact that Christ died for him, but can digest little more than this.

RETARDED GROWTH: What joy and fellowship there is in gatherings where the newly saved are present! In the spiritual realm, as in the physical, *everybody loves a baby!* But the joy that fills the hearts of loving parents is turned into bitter sorrow and disappointment if their babe fails to grow. Such a condition is as unspeakably sad and embarrassing as the other is joyous. Just so it is in the realm of the spiritual.

The carnal Christian continues in a state of protracted infancy. He must be kept exclusively on a milk diet because, though saved for years, he is still unable to "bear," or digest, solid food, still "unskillful in the Word," and needing to be taught the elementary things.

Think what a disappointment it must have been to the Apostle Paul as the Corinthian believers, having had the benefit of his own extended ministry and that of other great men of God, had failed to respond and grow, and still had to be dealt with as babes. Unable to digest the "solid food" of the Word of God, they had to be "fed ... with milk" (3:2).

THE CAUSE OF RETARDED GROWTH: In the physical realm retarded growth may be due to some mishap or may simply be one of the results of the curse, having no direct bearing on the behavior of the parents and certainly not of the child itself. In the spiritual realm this is not so. God has made abundant provision for every believer to grow to spiritual manhood, and Paul rebukes the Corinthians for *not* having grown spiritually.

The trouble with the Corinthians was that they did not have any great *appetite* for the Word, they did not have a *passion* to know - much less to obey - the truth, for the babe in Christ who "*desires*" the pure milk of the Word will surely "*grow thereby*" (I Pet. 2:2). This was also the trouble with the Hebrew believers mentioned above, for when he would have gone further into the great subject of Christ as "an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec," he was forced to write:

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing *ye are dull [slothful] of hearing*" (Heb. 5:11).

And this is precisely the cause of carnality among believers today. They desire only "the simple things," things that "warm their hearts." Indeed, they often boast of this, while it is actually a testimony to their immaturity.

**THE EVIDENCES OF RETARDED GROWTH-** Retarded growth is evidenced in many ways, all of which come under the heading of "*carnality*," or fleshliness. The Corinthian believers were careless about morals (5:1), were puffed up (4:18; 5:2), inconsiderate of others (6:1-7; 8:1,9,12), stingy (II Cor. 8:6-11; 11:7-9). While possessing the Spirit, they *walked* after the flesh.

One of the most marked indications of retarded growth among the Corinthians was self-interest and party strife. They were small, petty, so that Paul had to write to them:

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos;<sup>24</sup> are ye not carnal?" (I Cor. 3:3,4).

With the professing Church divided into hundreds of denominations, we do well to ponder thoughtfully over these first few verses of I Cor. 3. To think only in terms of "my church" or "our church," rather than in terms of "*the Church*"; to consider only self and party, is a sign of *Spiritual immaturity*. Sincere believers ought to grow up from such attitudes.

**BELIEVERS RESPONSIBLE TO GROW:** Let us put it down, and never forget it: God holds believers *responsible* to grow to spiritual manhood through sincere and diligent study of the Word. To the newly saved He says:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere [pure] milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2).

". . . Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. . ." (II Pet. 3:18).

And to all believers He says:

"For every one that useth milk [i.e., exclusively] is unskillful in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

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<sup>24</sup> Apollos was supposedly Paul's chief rival as a preacher.

"But strong meat [solid food] belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

"Therefore leaving the principles [basics] of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection [maturity] (Heb. 3:13 -6:1).

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

"But speaking the truth in love, may *grow up into Him* in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:14,15).

IT IS NOT ONLY WHERE ONE STANDS, doctrinally, that matters before God, but also where he is *going*. The above explains why Luther and Calvin, Wesley, Darby and others had so great a measure of spiritual power in their ministries and why they accomplished so much for God. They did not stifle growth by closing their eyes to truths which were unpopular. Indeed, they eagerly accepted what light God imparted to them and then faithfully proclaimed it to others. It explains too, why men of God who have inherited more light on the Word than Luther ever had, may yet be so utterly lacking in the power of the Spirit.

This is a day when ministers of the Word should pay special heed to these facts. Those who *know* more about the truth than others before them did, but reject *further* light and stifle *further* growth - for whatever reasons - will find their spiritual power diminishing.

For example: there may be Presbyterian or Baptist or other denominational ministers who have not yet seen the glory of the "One Body," or the all-sufficiency of its "One Baptism," yet may enjoy considerable spiritual power in proclaiming the truths they *do* understand. But let these same men *close their eyes* to the Pauline message when confronted with it and the power of their ministry will vanish. The author has witnessed this again and again, and this is the situation which is so prevalent on every hand today, and the reason why the Church, though larger than ever, is spiritually weak and ill. Men of God who know far more about Scripture than Luther, Calvin, Wesley or Darby ever did, are destitute of Spiritual power because, for personal reasons, they are rejecting *further* light, or are maintaining a discreet silence as to light they have been given, and the Church at large is feeling the results.

Let us then ask God to keep us ever growing, ever going *forward* in our knowledge of the Word and in our proclamation of it, that our testimony may be attended, in increasing degree, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

TWO CHRISTIAN GENTLEMEN: *Vers. 5-8*: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

"So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. "

One lesson brought out again and again in I Corinthians is that we cannot be too little, too *unimportant*, for God to use, but we *can* be too big, too important.

Humanly speaking Paul was a great man: a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a son of a line of Pharisees, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and later, as a believer in Christ, mightily used of God to found many Christian churches in Asia Minor and Europe, including this great church at Corinth, evidently the largest of all. Rightly loved and respected by thousands, he was a truly great man of God.

But now, here at Corinth, there had arisen a threat to his *popularity* in the person of a man named Apollos.

Apollos did not consider himself a rival to Paul, nor Paul to Apollos, but Apollos was also indeed a great man of God, "*eloquent . . . mighty in the Scriptures . . . instructed in the way of the Lord . . . fervent in spirit*" and "*teaching diligently the things of the Lord*" (Acts 18:24,25). Thus it was that the Corinthian believers had begun expressing their preferences for the one over the other, some boasting that they were followers of Paul and others that they were followers of Apollos.

In I Cor. 1:12 the apostle had rebuked the Corinthians with the words, "Now this I say ... every one of you saith, I am *of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ,*" but here in Chapters 3 and 4 he mentions only Apollos and himself, evidently because Apollos was, in the eyes of the majority, Paul's chief rival. And he *was*, as we have seen, a forceful preacher. We first find him at Ephesus where "*he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ*" (Acts 18:28).

Apollos' *true* greatness, however, lay in his humility, for we read in Acts 18:26 that he had allowed Paul's dear friends, Aquila and Priscilla, humble tentmakers, to show him "the way of God more perfectly." They could explain to him the further revelation committed to Paul: "the gospel of the grace of God." Evidently Apollos accepted this both humbly and gratefully, and this made him a still greater preacher of the Word. If Paul had any thought of rivalry, he surely had a formidable rival in Apollos now, for this eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, bold and diligent, could now do more than convince the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; he could preach Jesus Christ "*according to the revelation of the mystery*" (Rom. 16:25). By this time, however, he had left Corinth again and was *with Paul*, evidently at Ephesus (I Cor. 16:8,9).

Ah, but Paul was in no way envious of Apollos, nor Apollos of Paul. They were not rivals, nor did they consider themselves such. Thus Paul asks the Corinthians, "Who am I, or who is Apollos, but ministers [servants] by whom [not "on whom"] you believed, even as *the Lord* [not Paul or Apollos] gave to every man" (Ver. 5). "I have planted, Apollos watered," he declares, "*but GOD gave the increase*" (Ver. 6). Thus neither was the planter nor the waterer "anything," but God, who gave the increase (Ver. 7). All the glory should go to *Him*.

That Paul meant this sincerely, certainly where he himself was concerned, is evident from other passages from his pen which harmonize so beautifully with this, such as:

I Cor. 4:6: "And these things [lessons] brethren, I have in a figure transferred [or applied] to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; *that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written*, that no one of you should be puffed up for one against another."<sup>25</sup>

II Cor. 3:5: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves; but *our sufficiency is of God.*"

In promoting their "champions" these Corinthians were actually promoting *themselves* as though they were qualified to judge which was the greater man of God! This gave Paul ample reason to write as strongly as he did about their pride and their need to humble themselves before God - as, for example, in Ver. 18:

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, *let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*"

PAUL AND APOLLOS ONE: The declaration in Ver. 8 was demonstrated practically in the evident attitude of these brethren toward each other.

Against the background of Corinthian pride in almost *making* rivals out of Paul and Apollos, it is touching indeed to read at the close of the epistle (16:12) Paul's assertion that he had "*greatly desired*" Apollos to return to Corinth to minister to the brethren there, though he had to explain: "*but his will was not at all to come at this time.*" How different were both their attitudes from that of the Corinthians! And how well we do to heed the lesson and give God all the glory and thanksgiving for saving and using us.

How politicians love to boast of what they have done and will do! How the stars of the entertainment world love to shine! How they vie with each other for the spotlight and "eat up" the applause at their performances! Indeed, worldly psychologists tell us that one of the chief keys to success is self-esteem and self-

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<sup>25</sup> Note: "puffed up *for one against another.*" Supposing themselves to be competent judges, some were puffed up *for Paul* and *against Apollos* and others *for Apollos* and *against Paul*. What pride!

confidence. But this is not the key to *Christian* success. God's Word teaches self-abnegation and confidence in *Him*.

"For if a man think himself to be something when [actually] he *is nothing*, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3).

Thank God, by His grace and through the working of the Holy Spirit, we believers in Christ once came to face the fact that we were nothing but poor, lost sinners, condemned in the sight of a holy God. This was our salvation! This was what drove us to *Christ!* What good, then, can self-confidence do for us now? Thus Paul asked the Galatians:

"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3).

PAUL, THE MASTERBUILDER: *Vers. 9-17*: "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble:

"Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

"LABORERS TOGETHER WITH GOD": Ver. 9: Thank God for the *King James Version* here, for some modern translations have made this verse to read as if we alone are the "workers together," merely carrying out God's will. *Today's English Version* renders it, "*For we are partners, working together for God,*" and the *Revised Standard Version* reads, "*For we are fellow workmen for God.*" But this is all wrong and robs the passage of the precious truth that *God* has appointed us *His*

*fellow workers*. He has invited us to participate with Him in the building of the Church.

"YE ARE GOD'S BUILDING": Ver. 9: The words, "*Ye are God's husbandry [garden or farm]; ye are God's building,*" are apt metaphors here, coming between the apostle's description of his own *planting and Apollos' watering* (Vers. 6-8) on the one hand, and his responsibility as a "masterbuilder" (Ver. 10) on the other. In the passage before us, then, he deals with the Corinthian church as "God's *building*" (Vers. 9-17).

A WISE MASTERBUILDER: Ver. 70: Moses was the master-builder of the Old Testament Tabernacle. God gave him the plans and specifications, saying, "*See ... that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount*" (Heb. 8:5). But Paul too was a masterbuilder. As Moses represented the Law so Paul represents grace, for to him God gave, by special revelation, the plans and specifications for the building of the Church of the mystery, "the body of Christ" (Col. 1:24-27), described also as a *temple*.

Obviously Paul was not the masterbuilder, merely, of the local church at Corinth, but of *the Church*, for everywhere he proclaimed the same message and built upon the same principles. And this message and these principles differed widely from those upon which the Kingdom Church of Matt. 16:18 was to be - and will be - built. *That* was a prophesied Church, *this* was the Church of the mystery, "the Body of Christ" referred to above. The plans and specifications for that Church are found in the Old -Testament Scriptures. The plans and specifications for *this* Church were "*kept secret since the world began*" until revealed to and through Paul, the chief of sinners, saved by grace (Rom. 16:25; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:1-5; *et al*).

It is wonderful indeed to observe that the building of this holy temple, though long kept a profound secret (Gr., *musterion*, mystery), never foretold in Old Testament times, is nevertheless *now proven* by Old Testament Scriptures to have indeed been God's *eternal purpose* in Christ. For example, while the building of Solomon's temple was not said to be a type of the building of "the temple of God" of I Corinthians and Ephesians, nor *even said to be a type at all*, yet as we consider the *site* upon which it was built, the *preparations* made for its erection, the *person* of the *builder*, the *manner* of its building, the fabulous cost, etc., we cannot help exclaiming, "God had the temple of the dispensation of grace in mind all the while! His heart and mind overflowed with anticipation of it. This was indeed God's *eternal purpose!*"<sup>26</sup>

I HAVE LAID THE FOUNDATION: Ver. 10: Mark well, Paul does not say that he had been *building on* the foundation which another had laid, e.g., Christ as Messiah and King of Israel (Matt. 16:16-18). He says distinctly, "I have *laid* the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." *A new dispensation* was ushered in with the raising up of Paul, in which Christ was presented, not as King of Israel, but as

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<sup>26</sup> See the *Berean Searchlight* of August, 1985.

Lord over all (Gr. *kurios*). Before Paul, the title *kurios*, or *Lord*, was used of men as well as of God and of Christ. But in Paul's epistles it is consistently used of deity, and particularly of Christ as the Head, not only of the Body (Col. 1:18), but also as "the Head over all" (Eph. 1:19-23).

During His earthly ministry our Lord was to be known as "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:16; cf. John 1:49; 6:69; 11:27; Acts 8:37), while today He is to be known as *Lord over all*, "*raised ... from the dead and set at [God's] own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*" and "*head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. 1:20-23; cf. I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

By way of review, then, the Church of Matt. 16:18 was to be - and will be - built upon our Lord as *Messiah, the King of Israel*, while the Church of the Pauline Epistles is built upon Christ as *Lord over all*, dispensing the riches of His grace from the right hand of God, His Father.

"*But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon*" (Ver. 10). Thus the apostle proceeds to caution those of the "ye" who would - and all should - join the "we" as builders.

How urgently needed are these words of warning! Consider the condition of God's temple today. Is it "fitly framed together"? No indeed. Rather the "one body" of true believers is separated into discordant and rival denominations and sects. Hear them insist that they are Calvinists, Arminians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Pentecostals, etc.<sup>27</sup>

The reason for this confusion: the "builders" have not taken heed to build compatibly with the foundation laid by Paul. They have built Mosaic material, prophetic material, Petrean material, etc., upon the foundation laid by Paul. They preach from the Old Testament and the four Gospels so much of the time that they barely allude to the glorious truths revealed in the Pauline epistles. They stress the Ten Commandments but all too often fail to tell what happened to the Ten Commandments at the Cross (Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14). They stress the *Sermon on the Mount*, but say little or nothing about the exceeding riches of God's grace as we find them in Paul's writings. They talk about "building the kingdom," and strive vainly to carry out the so-called "great commission." They have taken baptism, tongues, hearings and signs of the times from another dispensation and have brought them into the dispensation of the grace of God, until the Church is so confused that many do not know what to believe.

Most of our Christian leaders never even discuss the 'mystery' which has become so unspeakably precious to instructed believers, and which was *the very theme of*

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<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that all who belong to these groups are true believers, but doubtless true believers are to be found among them all.

*Paul's message.* Indeed, they shun those who seek to rightly divide the Word of Truth, who recognize the distinctiveness of Paul's apostleship and message. Little wonder that the confusion and division in the Church is profound.

NO OTHER FOUNDATION: *Ver. 11:* Does the apostle refer here only to the foundation which he had laid? Does he mean that the *kingdom Church* of Matt. 16:18 was not built upon Jesus Christ? Indeed not. That Church too was built on Christ, but on Christ as *King* (John 1:49). Indeed the Greek *Christos* (Christ) is the equivalent of the Hebrew *Mahscheeah* (Messiah) meaning *anointed*. But the Church of today is built upon Christ as *Lord*, the one "far above all" (I Cor. 12:3; cf. Eph. 1:19-21; Phil. 2:11).

REWARDS OR LOSS. *Vers. 12-17:* The recurrence of two kinds of phraseology here is important. They are "every [or any] man" and "*how,*" "*work,*" and "*sort.*"

The apostle makes it clear, as he does in Rom. 14:10,12, that "every one of us" [Note the "us"] shall some day have his service for Christ examined by the fire of divine scrutiny. Note: "Let *every man* take heed .... *Every man's* work shall be made manifest . . . and the fire shall try *every man's* work .... If *any man's* work abide ... if *any man's* work shall be burned....."

He further makes it clear that he is not referring so much to our works as to our "*work,*" *our workmanship* as builders of God's temple. Note again: "Let every man take heed *how* he buildeth .... Every man's *work* shall be made manifest ... the fire shall try every man's *work, of what sort it is* ... If any man's *work* abide .... If any man's *work* shall be burned . . . ." <sup>28</sup>

We repeat that this has nothing to do with the Great White Throne, where sinners will be judged for their *works*, but with the "Judgment Seat [bema] of Christ," where our service for Christ as *believers* will be brought under review.

With this in view, let us ask ourselves *how* we, God's workmen, have built upon the foundation laid by the Apostle Paul. Is the Church today, as far as its workmanship is concerned, built mostly of "gold, silver, precious stones," or of "wood, hay, stubble"? Has it been built undispensationally, with material from the Law, the Sermon on the Mount, Pentecost, and the death of Christ for sin, or with the mighty truths of the finished, all-sufficient redemption wrought by Christ, "the preaching of the cross," and the riches of grace that flows from Calvary? How imperative, then, that the builders of the Church *practice* II Tim. 2:15:

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth."*

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<sup>28</sup> In using the metaphors "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," it seems as though the apostle is envisioning a raging fire in Corinth itself, a fire in which those buildings constructed of gold, silver and precious stones-and there were many-would stand unscathed while those constructed of wood, hay and stubble would be utterly destroyed.

Finally, it should be noted that *rewards or loss of rewards* are in view here. At the Great White Throne it will be God's eternal judgment upon sinners, but here *believers in Christ* will be rewarded, or will suffer loss of such rewards, for the kind of service they have rendered to Christ as *believers*. Thus there is no question here about being saved or lost. Indeed Vers. 14,15 declare:

"If any man's work abide, which he both built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but *he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*"

The reason for all this care in the building of the temple of God is clear from Ver. 17:

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy;<sup>29</sup> for THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, which temple ye are."

In the light of all this we cannot emphasize too strongly that the Judgment Seat of Christ is more than a detail of theological doctrine; it is a *reality*, an actual future event to take place - who knows how soon?

Who knows how suddenly the great Building Inspector will appear to examine "every man's work of what sort it is" (Ver. 13)? Then it will be too late to say, "I wish I had been more concerned about being an 'approved' workman for God." It will be too late to say this then, while *others* are receiving lavish rewards for work well done, and your work, like so much "wood, hay, stubble," goes up in the flames of His searching scrutiny. Oh, *you* will be saved! You were saved by grace, through faith in Christ. But your shame and loss will be bitter indeed as you realize what you might have done, what you *should* have done, to proclaim to others a "rightly divided" Word. Your loss will be all the more humiliating when you realize that you are saved only "so as by fire"<sup>30</sup> and that, while you can praise God for *His grace to you*, you received no reward for *faithfulness to Him*. Little wonder Paul says, in II Cor. 5:11, regarding this very event:

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. . . ."

It is hard to understand why neo-evangelicals are pressing their unscriptural involvement with the world, when, despite their well-meant efforts, society is becoming more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah.

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<sup>29</sup> The words rendered "defile" and "destroy," here, are the same Greek word, *phthiro*. On what grounds the KJV translators rendered the latter with a stronger term than the former, we are not aware.

<sup>30</sup> As a man fleeing, naked, from his burning home.

For such involvement Lot barely escaped with his life. Yes, *he* was saved, but his home, his riches, his Sodom friendships and *all his efforts to change Sodom* went up in smoke.

This, we believe, is the sense of the term "so as by fire," in I Cor. 3:15.

Many a Christian leader who is now widely acclaimed will then be brought very low to see his superficial service burned up as so much "wood, hay and stubble." May God help us, then, to be not only zealous, but *obedient, intelligent* workmen for God, "rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

In summary, let us emphasize the fact that the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:12-17; II Cor. 5:10), unlike the Great White Throne, will be for *believers* only. Since our sins have already been judged at Calvary and their full penalty paid there, the Judgment Seat (*Bema*) of Christ will have to do only with our service and conduct *as Christians*, and each believer will either "receive a reward" or will "suffer loss" (of reward). This has *nothing* to do with salvation, which is *wholly* by grace and is based upon the *finished* work of Christ in the payment for sin.

**J. N. Darby** offered as striking collateral proof of this the fact that we believers will already have been glorified by the time we appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ (See [I Cor. 15:51-53](#); [Phil. 3:20,21](#)).<sup>31</sup>

BECOMING FOOLS TO BECOME WISE: *Vers. 18-23*: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

"And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

"Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

"Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

"And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Note: this passage begins with a warning against self-deception; a form of self-deception that becomes ever more prevalent as the Church grows in number but declines spiritually.

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<sup>31</sup> *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, Acts-Phil., P. 287.

Wishing to be broad and open-minded the neo-evangelicals have placed themselves and their followers in grave spiritual danger. Feeling themselves mature and seeking to make an impact in intellectual circles they, and their followers, spend too much time examining all the current theological innovations, while neglecting the study of the Scriptures themselves. This is just how many a promising young pastor has made shipwreck of his ministry, perhaps having graduated from seminary ill-prepared to expound the Word. It is sad indeed to see a young divinity graduate emerge with a few degrees, but no temperature, spiritually; whose acquisition of knowledge has made no real change in his life except to make him self-important; who has learned a few *things* but has been brought no closer to Christ. It is sad to see such a student with his mind on credits, while forgetting to ask himself whether God can give him any credit for his misdirected efforts.

Rather, as Ver. 18 points out, each believer must humbly "*become a fool, that he may be wise.*" Let us, then, take the place of the little girl who came home from her first day at school. "What did you learn today?" her mother asked.

The answer: "Nothing, I guess. Teacher says we all have to come back again tomorrow."

THE THOUGHTS OF THE WISE: *Vers. 19,20:* God does not merely despise "the wisdom of this world," he *frustrates* it, knowing how "vain" and useless it is.

Our Lord, when on earth, "rejoiced" and gave thanks to His Father for *hiding* the really important things from "the wise and prudent" and revealing them to "babes." So important is it to have the right *attitude* in relationship to God and the things of God.

Similarly Paul wrote of himself:

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God,* we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward" (II Cor. 1:12).

An essential quality of any successful builder for God, then, is a willingness to *learn*. In the erection of God's holy temple it is the greatest folly to place the will of man above the Word of God, or to substitute human judgment for divine revelation.

LET NO MAN GLORY IN MEN: *Vers. 21-23:* The Corinthians had actually set themselves up *above* Paul and Apollos, their teachers, boastfully deciding, each for himself, who was the *greater* teacher. Think of it: the pupil sitting in judgment upon his teachers! "This is wrong," Paul exclaims. "Apollos and I - and all else are *yours*, gifts from God to you." "*And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's* (Ver. 23).

"*Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours*" (Ver. 21). It is not a question of personalities - which might outshine the other-but of a *message*, a

revelation of grace, committed first to Paul, and now to us by the glorified Lord. And God has given ample help to those whose true desire it is to make this message known to others.

The cure for denominational division and partisan Christianity, then, is the realization that faithful men of God are *ours*, given to us for our spiritual profit. Paul, Apollos, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Darby, Scofield, O'Hair, were all gifts of God to the Church, but we are not to look upon any of them as our leaders in all things theological. Even *they* would not desire this.

## CHAPTER IV

### *I Corinthians 4:1-21*

HOW PAUL WISHED TO BE KNOWN: *I Cor. 4:1,2*: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

"Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

We who seek to "rightly divide the Word of truth" and to preach Christ "according to the revelation of the mystery," are often frowned upon by those who preach what they call "a more balanced gospel." We should never apologize for this stand, however, for the Apostle Paul made it very clear that he and his co-laborers *wished to be known* as "the ministers [servants] of Christ, and *stewards of the mysteries of God*," i.e., the glorious revelation committed to him, with its associated "mysteries," or secrets. Some of these were: the blessing of the Gentiles during the temporary casting away of Israel, the reconciliation of believing Jews and Gentiles to God by the cross, the "one body" and its one baptism," our heavenly position and blessings, and the rapture of the Body to be with Christ.

Some books written on "The Mysteries of God" have included "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," "the mystery of the seven stars," "the mystery of Babylon," *et al*, secrets in no way related to the great mystery revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. Surely he does not mean that he wished to be known as a steward of these. Rather he refers to the "mysteries" embodied in "*the mystery*" revealed to him for the present dispensation (Eph. 3:1-3).

Indeed, the apostle called this long-hidden message his God-given *gospel* (Rom. 16:25), and was never ashamed to be known as a steward responsible to proclaim it.

It should be noted at the outset that the word "steward" lies at the very heart of dispensational truth. The root of this word, both in English and in Greek has a very simple meaning: *to administer, to dispense, to deal out*. We have medical dispensaries, clothes dispensaries, food dispensaries, at which medicines, food and clothing are dispensed to the needy.

Some of these dispensations may cover eight hours a day, or more or less, but it does not follow from this that a dispensation is a period of time, as some have taught. Likewise a political administration, during which a nation's affairs are dispensed by the head or heads of state, *covers* a period of time, but is not itself a period of time. It is important to understand this distinction clearly in studying the dispensations of God.

The word "dispensation," Gr., *oikonomia*, is not a mere theological term. It is used many times in Scripture, though not always translated thus. In Eph. 3:2 Paul

writes to the Gentile believers about "*the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward.*" Just as the dispensation of the Law was committed to Moses ([John 1:17](#)), so the dispensation of the grace of God was committed to Paul.

But here in I Cor. 4 the same Greek word is rendered *stewardship* in our English Bible. This is because the organic meaning of *oikonomia* is *house management*. Thus a "steward" was more than a servant, as some have supposed; he was the *head servant*, the one into whose hands the management of the household was committed. He dealt out the money for the household necessities, dispensed the food and clothing to the servants and children, paid the wages, etc. In a word, he was the *dispenser* of his lord's affairs. Eliezar and Joseph were such stewards ([Gen. 15:2; 24:2; 39:4](#)).

A STEWARD MUST BE FAITHFUL: Ver. 2 of our text reminds us of Luke 12:42:

"And the Lord said, Who then is that FAITHFUL AND WISE steward [*oikonomos*] whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?"

Luke 16:1,2 teaches the same lesson:

"And He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain *rich man*, which had a steward [*oikonomos*] and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

"And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

These passages of Scripture explain why Paul declared that he was a "minister [servant] of Christ" and a "steward [dispenser] of the mysteries of God," adding that "it is *required* in stewards that a man be found *faithful*." Paul occupied a position of considerable responsibility. He must not fail. To the Galatians he wrote:

". . . if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" ([Gal. 1:10](#)).

And to the Corinthians:

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; *for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!*"

"For if I do this thing willingly from the heart] I have reward, but if against my will,<sup>32</sup> *a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me*" ([I Cor. 9:16,17](#)).

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<sup>32</sup> I.e., if I don't *feel* like it.

As a steward of the gospel committed to him, then, he *must* proclaim it faithfully, not striving to please men, but God, whose steward he was.

From the foregoing it is clear that in our witness for God the one great requisite is *faithfulness*. We are not commissioned to accomplish certain things, but to be *faithful* in our testimony. God has not sent us forth to save souls, but to "preach the Word." Saving souls is *His prerogative*; preaching the Word *our responsibility* - and privilege. If men will not hear the Word, if they will not receive it, we are not told to seek for something else which they will receive. Indeed we are forewarned that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," and will "turn away their ears from the truth," but we are charged still to continue to "*preach the Word*" (II Tim. 4:2-4).

Many of God's people today look for *results*, and unless we are able to present some report of our *accomplishments*, our work is considered a failure. But we have nothing whatever to do with results. We are responsible only to be *faithful*. Results are God's concern; faithfulness ours, and when we stand before "the judgment seat of Christ" it is the "faithful steward" who will receive the rewards.

A VERY SMALL THING: *Vers. 3,4*: In closing this part of his defense of his apostleship, he says:

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

"For I know nothing by [or against] myself; yet am I no hereby justified: but He *that judgeth me is the Lord.*"

As we have seen, some of the Corinthians had come to question Paul's apostleship and criticize his teachings. But with him it was "a very small thing" to be judged by them, or by any man. He was *God's* steward, not theirs, and as he was later to write to the Roman believers:

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. . ." (Rom. 14:4).

We who preach Christ "according to the revelation of the mystery" today should bear this well in mind. All about us there are those who would have us "get into the mainstream of Christianity, preach a more balanced message," etc. But this we cannot do, for stewards are "required" to be "faithful," and Paul's stewardship is ours too. Should we now allow men, especially men who treat the Word of God very superficially, to sit in judgment upon us and tell us what to preach, or to deter us from proclaiming faithfully *the message which God has committed to us*? We should not.

THE LORD IS MY JUDGE: *Ver. 4*: The Greek *en* here is more often rendered "in" than "by" in KJV, and it seems clear that Paul's meaning in this verse is that while

he is not conscious of anything contrary to God's will within, yet this does not justify him, for "*He that judgeth me is the Lord.*" However, this was an additional reason why *they* were not authorized to judge him.

Mature believers should indeed judge between right and wrong, between truth and error, but surely the carnal believers at Corinth were not the ones to sit in judgment upon Paul, God's appointed apostle to the Gentiles, especially where his motives were concerned. Thus he admonishes them:

"THEREFORE JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME": Ver. 5: "until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."<sup>33</sup>

When the Lord comes to summon us to His Judgment Seat, He will reward us on the basis of full and thorough knowledge. It should not be overlooked, however, that while Paul has much to say about suffering loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ, in *this* passage the emphasis is upon the rewards to be dealt out: *who* will receive such rewards and why.

Then the little old lady, serving Christ as she can, but all unnoticed; that young man, poor in this world's goods, but living consistently for his Lord; that person generally considered odd, but breathing love for Christ, will all be recognized and honored with "praise" and "rewards" (Cf. [I Cor. 3:14](#); [II Cor. 5:10](#)). For then the Lord will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" and will manifest the inner motives of our hearts. Indeed, it will be a blessing to have Him deal thus with us about our *unfaithfulness* to Him, so that our fellowship through eternity may be unmarred by the memory of any sin still unconfessed.

A LIVING ILLUSTRATION: Ver. 6: "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes;<sup>34</sup> that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."

Note: they were puffed up *for* one *against* the other, some championing Paul, others Apollos, as though *they* were qualified to determine who was the greater. So puffed up were they.

Thus Paul says in effect, "I have applied the things I have been writing about to myself and Apollos as an illustration and a lesson to you. Do we act like rivals or competitors? Do we, either of us, seek the limelight, or try to cut each other out? You know we do not,<sup>35</sup> So *learn in us* not to think of men<sup>36</sup> above that which is written."

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<sup>33</sup> I.e., each shall receive *due* praise from God.

<sup>34</sup> Lit., "applied to myself and to Apollos" - as an illustration.

<sup>35</sup> See notes on 3:5-8, 21-23.

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? "And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory,<sup>37</sup> as if thou hadst not received it?" (Ver. 7).

These Corinthian believers felt that their particular preference for Paul or for Apollos marked them as intellectually, or spiritually, superior to their opponents. But Paul responds by the challenge: "*Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?*"

Or, "Do you feel that your *brain* is superior, or your powers of perception greater? Well, who made your brain, and keeps it working? or who gave you these powers of perception? *God*, of course. Should this not cause you to humble yourself before Him rather than make you conceited? Why are you puffed up as though your brain and its power to think clearly were your own doing?"

And now the apostle drives this lesson home to them with biting sarcasm:

"Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us. . . ." (Ver. 8).

In effect he says, "You have all you need, and are great leaders without us around! You don't need our counsel or advice. You are fully capable to manage the affairs of the Corinthian Church by yourselves."

But here he drops the irony to address them in a sober, earnest manner:

"I would to God ye *did* reign, that we also might reign with you."

That is, "I wish you were as noble and as virtuous as you imagine yourselves to be. I wish you had made such spiritual advances that you could truly be represented as full, and as rich, and as princes, needing nothing, that we might partake with you of this real and true joy. The words "*I would*," or "*I wish*," however, imply (1) a *doubt* that this was so and (2 ) a desire for a change in their condition that his fellowship with them might again be full and unrestrained.

PAUL AN EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN SUFFERING: I *Cor.* 4.9, 10: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, [both]<sup>38</sup> to angels and to men.

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<sup>36</sup> The words "of men," in Ver. 6, were supplied by the translators, so that some have concluded that Paul here simply means to exhort the Corinthian believers not to be highminded. But that there is a legitimate elipsis here, rightly supplied by the translators, is evident from the fact that the apostle adds: "that no one of you be puffed up *for* one *against* another."

<sup>37</sup> Gr., *kauchaomai*, to boast.

<sup>38</sup> The Greek *kai* denotes *emphasis* as well as addition.

"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised."

The apostle evidently alludes here to the great Roman "victory marches," in which the commander and his soldiers returned from the battle in glory, leading their captives behind them for the multitudes to gawk at, and the "criminals" appointed unto death last of all, to gratify the brutal passions of the populace. Thus he and Apollos<sup>39</sup> were made a "spectacle" both to angels and to men.

The words of Ver. 10 are again words of reproach: they set forth as "*wise... strong ... honorable*"; he and Apollos as "*fools ... weak... despised*." So the faithful servants of God must often bear dishonor, while the unfaithful shine as stars before the unthinking multitudes.

UNTO THIS PRESENT HOUR: *I Cor. 4:11-13*: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;

"And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

"Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."<sup>40</sup>

How this should have reminded the Corinthians of the days when he was among them and the persecution was great! How he had labored among them "*in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling*" (I Cor. 2:3), his very life in daily jeopardy - and how then too he had had to work at making tents "with his own hands" to make ends meet. How lovingly and generously they should have supported him in those days. They would not have missed their gifts. But to their shame, while even now he toiled and suffered, they boasted. While he was made the filth and scum of all things, they lived in affluence and were not ashamed. Today many Christians likewise fail to show due gratitude for the grace that saved them, or to follow Paul in his determination to pay whatever it cost to proclaim "the gospel of the grace of God."

As we have said, he refers mostly to himself in the above passage, as is clear from II Cor. 11:23-33, where he lists the sufferings he had personally endured up until that time, only a year or so later.

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<sup>39</sup> In using the plural "apostles," he still, evidently, includes Apollos with himself as an apostle in the more general sense: "one sent" by God.

<sup>40</sup> Presumably the "we" in this passage still includes Apollos, although the apostle often uses this pronoun to refer to himself and all those most closely associated with him at the time. However, the words "unto this present hour" compared with the long list of sufferings found in II Cor. 11:23-33 would indicate that he refers most particularly to himself

This list is nearly always read too hurriedly. A bit of meditation upon the details: the scourgings, the beatings, the stoning, the shipwrecks, the wearisome journeys, the perils from floods, robbers, Jews, Gentiles; the perils in the city, in the desert, in the sea, and among false brethren; the fatigue, the pain, the watchings, the hunger, the cold, the nakedness, and then "the care of all the churches" - a bit of meditation on these particular details in his life of persecution and suffering, will soon explain why he cries out:

"Are they ministers of Christ (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. . . . Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" (11 Cor. 11:23,29).

In the nature of the case Paul, an ambassador of grace among enemy aliens,<sup>41</sup> would be expected to bear sufferings - the same sufferings he had inflicted upon others before his conversion to Christ. This constant suffering which Paul bore, however, was in a real sense "*the sufferings of Christ,*" the expression of the world's continued enmity against God's Son. This explains an otherwise difficult passage in his letter to the Colossians:

"[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and *fill up that which is behind [which remains] of the afflictions of Christ* in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24).

Such sufferings are sweet, however, and it is little wonder that he rejoiced in them as they brought him into closest fellowship with the rejected Christ Himself. Little wonder it was his deep desire:

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and *the fellowship of His sufferings,* being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3: 10).

Thus, even in his sufferings, Paul stands out distinctively as the apostle of God's grace, chosen to proclaim the love of Christ to a world at enmity with Him.

HOW COULD ONE MAN ENDURE ALL THIS? The answer to this question is also to be found in the apostle's own writings. It is simply that he was *divinely empowered,* as the following passages indicate.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored *more abundantly than they all;* yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor. 15:10).

"For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, *the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles*" (Gal. 2:8).

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<sup>41</sup> See the author's work, *Ambassadors for Christ.*

"Whereunto I also labor, striving according to *His working, which worketh in me mightily*" (Col. 1: 29).

"At my first answer [before Nero] no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and *strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*" (II Tim. 4:16,17).

Thus it was that the apostle could write about "the Epiphany," or shining forth, of grace to all mankind (Tit. 2:11).

"IN CHRIST JESUS I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU": *I Cor. 4:14, 15*: "I write not these things to shame you,<sup>42</sup> but as my beloved sons<sup>43</sup> I warn you.

"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

"As my beloved *bairns* [born-ones] I warn you," the Scotsman would say. They were on a dangerous course, and he would still deal with them as a loving father. And a loving spiritual father he had been to them - and to many. To the Thessalonians he could write:

"...ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" (I Thes. 2:11).

True, they had any number of instructors in Christ-and they were "puffed up for one against another," feeling quite qualified to judge between them. "But," says Paul, "ye have not many fathers," and then proceeds to remind them: "*In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*" Some, indeed, had been led to Christ through others converted before them, but they were but "secondary fathers," for it was Paul who had brought the gospel to Corinth, and those who had received his message were especially dear to him, much as was Onesimus, whom he calls: "*my son ... begotten in my bonds*" (Phile. 10).

"BE YE FOLLOWERS OF ME": *I Cor. 4:16,17*: "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church."

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<sup>42</sup> i.e., to put you to shame.

<sup>43</sup> Gr., *teknas*, "born-ones."

When we consider the wide difference in lifestyle between the Corinthian believers and the Apostle Paul, even as revealed in the preceding verses of this chapter, it is quite natural that Paul should urge them in a general way to be followers of him, but there is more, far more involved in this exhortation, for these words of Paul to the Corinthian saints are also the inspired Word of God to us.

**FOLLOWING THE LOWLY JESUS:** How many Christians today - and their spiritual leaders - quickly skip over Paul's exhortations to follow him, as if they did not belong in the Bible, as though they were not inspired of God, and were not to be taken seriously to heart and obeyed! Indeed, if some fellow-Christian should mention following Paul it would be as if he had gone into some terrible heresy.

Such people hold that believers should be followers of Christ alone - that is, of Christ as He lived and taught while on earth. Yet the above exhortation, in identical or similar phraseology, is repeated again and again in Paul's epistles. And remember, these were divinely inspired as the Word of God *to us*. But, alas, it is not always carelessness or ignorance that causes so many to pass over these exhortations so lightly. In many cases it is *rebellion*, sheer rebellion against the distinctive ministry and authority of Paul as God's ordained apostle to the Gentiles.

If the reader's pulse is rising at this point, we suggest you "simmer down" and thoughtfully consider *what God's Word says* about this matter. And, bear the author witness, that he is not asking his readers to believe him, but rather asks them to be true Bereans, searching the Scriptures to see whether these things be so.

Obviously we should follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and even God the Father (Eph. 5:1,2), in the sense that we should emulate their moral and spiritual virtues and obey their will *for us*. But this is by no means all that is generally meant by the phrase "following Jesus." The theme of scores of hymns like "How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior" and "He, the great Example is a pattern for me" and the oft-asked question, "What would Jesus have done?" prove this to be so.

Do you say: "We should follow Jesus and not any man"? We can understand your feelings, but surely you have not thought this through carefully in the light of Scripture, much less the inspired Epistles of Paul.

If we should ask you whether we should follow the glorified Christ in heaven, as He lives *now*, or the lowly Jesus on earth, as He lived *then*, your reply would doubtless be that we *cannot* follow Him as He is now, in heaven, exalted "far above all," but that we must follow the life and teachings of Christ on earth.

But our reply to this must be: "How can you do this in any specific, detailed way? Do you follow Him into the synagogue every Sabbath day for worship *"as His custom was"*? And presuming your parents were followers of Christ too, did they take you, their son, to observe the religious rite of circumcision at 8 days of age? Are you "under the Law," as Gal. 4:4 says that He was, and as He taught His

disciples to be? (See [Matt. 19:16-21](#); [23:1-3](#); *et al*). Do you eat only kosher (ceremonially clean) food, as He did? Do you observe the Jewish feast days?

And these are but a few of the *technical* matters. We might enquire further: Do you live a perfect life? Does your righteousness, morally and religiously, exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? "If not," said Jesus, "*ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 5:20). And would it be quite proper of *you* to call insincere spiritual leaders hypocrites, whited sepulchres and all the uncomplimentary names that Jesus called the Pharisees? Then surely you are not in any *specific* sense a *follower of Jesus*, nor can it be proper of you to ask, when questions arise, "What would Jesus have done?"

Do you not see that our Lord on earth called His disciples to follow Him as *pupils* follow a *teacher* in His proclamation of "the gospel of the kingdom," but more importantly, like the Law, He would show them how far short they would come, and how desperately they needed a *Savior* (Cf. [Rom. 3:19](#)). Thus His ultimate purpose in coming to earth was not to teach men how to live, but *to die for their sins*, as we read in I Tim. 1:15, where Paul points to himself as the outstanding demonstration of this fact:

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that *Christ Jesus come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*" (See also Ver. 1 6).

In this same letter to the Corinthians (15:1-3) the apostle indicates that he is not only the divine demonstration of this glorious fact, but *also the divinely-appointed messenger* to make it known:

"...I declare unto you the *gospel which I preached unto you*, which also ye have received . . . *by which also ye are saved* . . . how that *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*" (I Cor. 15:1-3).<sup>44</sup>

So, unsaved friend, if you try to be saved by following Jesus and walking in His steps, as they say, you will be lost for all eternity, for His perfect holiness will only call attention to the exceeding sinfulness of your sin. And you, Christian friend, if you make our Lord's earthly life your pattern, you will surely dishonor the *glorified* Lord, now exalted "*far above all*" (Eph. 1:20,21).

FOLLOWING OUR EXALTED LORD: But now let us return to I Cor. 4:16, Do you wish to follow our *exalted* Lord? Then you can do it only by obeying this passage from the pen of Paul, where, by divine inspiration he says: "*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*"

The risen, glorified Lord did not commit His long-hidden purpose and proclamation either to this writer or to his readers, or to any man but *Paul, the chief*

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<sup>44</sup> There is much more to this good news, of course, but this is that around which all the rest revolves. Paul calls it "*the preaching of the cross.*"

of sinners, saved by grace. See Gal. 1:11,12; 1 Cor. 15:3; Eph. 3:1-3; Rom. 16:25; II Tim. 1:9-11; Tit. 1:2,3; et al).

This is why Paul is the only apostle who exhorts us again and again, "Be ye followers of me." And it explains why he wrote to these same Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). It also explains why he forewarns the Corinthian believers with the words:

"... if I come again, I will not spare; since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me. ." (II Cor. 13:2,3).

Thus the Apostle Paul had legitimate reason to exhort believers, both in a general way and in particular: "*Be ye followers of me.*"

We do not have the space in this volume to deal at length with Phil. 3:10-17, where this exhortation is applied to his life and conduct, but we urge the reader to examine this passage carefully in this connection.

This passage, perhaps better than any other, explains how Paul could write to the Corinthians about sending Timothy to them to "bring [them] into remembrance of [his] ways," which could be best characterized by his words, "*which be in Christ.*" And note: so he taught "everywhere and in every church." He himself was God's prime example of salvation by grace and godly conduct - by grace.

Have we then replaced the Lord Jesus Christ with a mere human being? We have not. We have rather recognized the fact that "the lowly Jesus" of past history is now the glorified Lord, exalted "far above all" at the Father's right hand, and dispensing the riches of His grace - so dearly bought at Calvary - *through Paul, who says by divine inspiration:*

"Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (I Cor. 4:16).

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

CHEAP TALK AND MIGHTY POWER: I Cor. 4:18-21: "Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

"What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"

Some at Corinth were so arrogant that they boasted that Paul would never come to Corinth himself to deal with the situation there. They said in effect: "He won't

come! He wouldn't dare! He knows that his apostleship is widely questioned here." But Paul said, "*I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will,<sup>45</sup> and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.*" The power of Paul's mighty ministry had been amply demonstrated in them. Indeed he spoke of them as "the seal of his apostleship" (I Cor. 9:2). It was against almost unbelievable odds that God had used him to found this great church at Corinth.

Thus he closes this section of his epistle with the challenge:

*"What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"* That is, "Will I have to use a rod? Will I have to rebuke you and put you to shame, or will it be a loving, happy reunion?"

The lesson of these verses should surely be applied to the Church today as the Word of God to us. We are living in a day when weak Christians are offended by warning, reproof and rebuke. They would have us say only pleasant things. But this is nothing new. In Isaiah's day the people said, "*Speak unto us smooth things*" (Isa. 30:10), and Psa. 55:20,21 refers to those who were unfaithful enough to oblige: "*He hath broken his covenant. His words are smoother than butter....*" i.e., don't trust him.

Perhaps there has never been a day in the history of the Church when the rod was so sorely needed as now, for indeed, we are moving ever closer to the rapture of the Church to be with Christ and the terrible "tribulation" that will follow on earth. The last days of the present dispensation, as depicted in I Tim. 4 and II Tim. 3, surely appear to be almost upon us. How urgent then to follow Paul, and his instructions in these very chapters, lest we drift with the tide of permissivism and apostasy that surrounds us on every hand. May we, by God's grace, "*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*" until the moment He comes for us.

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<sup>45</sup> A wise qualification, for as it turned out he did not come to them at that time: not because he had not wished or intended to come, however (See II Cor. 1:15-23).

## CHAPTER V

### *I Corinthians 5:1-13*

AN EPISTLE FOR OUR DAY: Paul's epistles to the Corinthians are, in their way, the most appropriate of all his letters to the day in which we live.

First, they cast the most abundant light on recent widespread attempts to recover the miracles of Pentecost. Thus they are appropriate *dispensationally*. But they are appropriate *morally* too, for more than any other of Paul's epistles, they deal with the moral problems which so beset and frustrate us in our day.

GROSS IMMORALITY IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH: *I Cor. 5: 1*: "it is reported commonly<sup>46</sup> that there is fornication<sup>47</sup> among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

Ver. 1 refers to this immorality as an ongoing thing, yet in Vers. 2,3 the word "deed" identifies it as an act. Evidently the accused had taken his father's wife into his home as his own wife.

Note: it does not say that his immorality involved his *mother*, but his "*father's wife*." This has led some to conclude that the woman in the case was not his mother, but probably his stepmother. Further consideration, however, appears to render this conclusion untenable. When we consider the gross immorality that prevailed among the pagans, and especially among those at Corinth, a two-port city, it hardly seems likely that adultery with one's stepmother (not a blood relative) would have been so abhorrent to them as not even to be mentioned among them. Further, Paul's strong language about it: "*Everybody is talking about it . . . such fornication is not even named among the Gentiles..... You should be mourning, that this man might be taken away from you. . . . Deliver him to Satan. . . . Put away from among yourselves that wicked person*": all this strong language seems to indicate that the sin was an unusually heinous one, one which the pagan Gentiles *would not* even speak of. That is, he was actually guilty of *incest*: cohabitation with a close blood relative.

Perhaps the woman involved is designated "his father's wife" rather than "his mother," to emphasize the wickedness of taking to himself, not merely another's wife, but *his own father's wife*. But there is more:

At least three times in the Pentateuch this form of incest is designated as a man lying with his "*father's wife*." This was a capital offense, cursed by God ([Lev. 20:11](#); [Deut. 22:30](#); [27:20](#)), thus it is not strange to find Paul referring to it in the *same phraseology*, and with the same depth of feeling.

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<sup>46</sup> Gr., *holos*, "all together."

<sup>47</sup> Gr., *porneia*, from which our *pornography*. It denotes any illicit sexual intercourse or sex perversion, but was the word most commonly used for fornication.

The offender was fortunate that he was living under the dispensation of grace; otherwise Paul would have had to say: "He must be executed; he must be put to death."

AND YE ARE PUFFED UP: *I Cor. 5:2*: "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that both done this deed might be taken away from among you."

Mark carefully: they had *not* mourned, for had they mourned over this scandal, this blight upon their reputation as Christian believers, they would surely have taken action to rid themselves of it. But the passage states: "*And ye are puffed up*" -not merely, "Ye condone it," but "Ye are *puffed up*." Now we know that they were puffed up about other things too, but stated thus in this connection, it appears possible, if not probable, that some of them, actually applauded this immoral man as a champion of Christian liberty. Certainly we see such things taking place about us in the professing Church today, and Paul's phrase, "hath so done this deed," indicates that this man had daringly, brazenly, taken his father's wife as his own.

PAUL HAD ALREADY JUDGED THE MATTER: *I Cor. 5:3-5*: For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed.

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power<sup>48</sup> of our Lord Jesus Christ,

"To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."<sup>49</sup>

How grateful the apostle would have been could he have written to these Corinthian believers as he did to the Colossians:

"For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ" (Col. 2:5).

Though the Corinthians had grown so permissive in their conduct, Paul was present with them in spirit too, and had already come to a conclusion as to what should be done.<sup>50</sup> The immoral brother had persisted in going on in Satan's way; now let him have a real taste of it. Let him learn what it is for a believer to live in sin *without any brother* to counsel with, any brother who might care enough to help him as he begins to reap the fruits of his wicked behavior. Let him feel what it is to have brethren *refuse* to have fellowship with him. Giving him over to Satan and the

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<sup>48</sup> I.e., authority.

<sup>49</sup> When we meet and stand before Him: I Cor. 1:8; II Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16.

<sup>50</sup> Evidently they followed his instructions.

world again, might seem to him like regained liberty at first, but sin corrupts and dissipates the human frame, and soon, hopefully, he would learn his lesson.<sup>51</sup>

This last is important, for this action was to be taken *for this brother's good* (Ver. 5). The punishment of Christ-rejectors, will be "the *wrath* of God, poured out *without mixture*" (Rev. 14:10), but here we have divine *discipline* of one of God's own, and "whom *the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*" (Heb. 12:6).

What grace! Even when God says, "Put that man out of the assembly, excommunicate him, have no fellowship with him, make him ashamed," He does so for the man's *good*, that he may be restored and become again the kind of Christian he should be.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

That the fallen brother was indeed "exercised thereby," is evident from II Cor. 2:6-8 where we learn that he was graciously restored, and that because of his fall into immorality he was now even in danger of being "swallowed up with over-much sorrow" (Ver. 7). This was a wholesome reaction. Surely *he* was no longer "puffed up," no longer arrogant, but rather "a broken and empty vessel," now "meet for the Master's use," and doubtless providing a much-needed lesson to the rest of the assembly.

THE BIBLE AND IMMORALITY: Probably the foregoing has already answered, in part, the question sometimes posed by weak Christians: Why did God even include such a passage as this in His Word so that unbelievers can scoff at Christians and call the Bible a "dirty book"?

Certainly the Bible is the farthest thing from a "dirty book." It never uses suggestive language, or refers to sexual sins so as to promote or encourage immorality. It never refers to immorality in a flippant or frivolous manner as do the pornographic publications of our wicked day.

The Bible does *expose* sin-including sexual immorality -and *condemns* it. Even King David, with all his power and influence, could not erase, or prevent the publication of the Scripture record of his shameful adultery with Bathsheba and the murder that followed, nor, though "a man after God's own heart," could he escape paying dearly for his sin.

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Rom. 6:21; 8:6,13; Gal. 6:8-all written to believers, hence he is not referring to eternal death, but to death in our *spiritual experience*. "Be spiritually minded," he says, "and you will blossom and grow, but be carnally minded and you will wither and die - as far as your *spiritual experience* is concerned."

Yes, the Bible deals with sex, and sometimes very bluntly, but never lightly or irresponsibly. And those who today even toy with the idea of sex before marriage, or apart from marriage, would do well to ponder over an important passage on the subject in Heb. 13:4:

"Marriage is honorable in all [i.e., entirely so] and the bed undefiled, BUT WHOREMONGERS AND ADULTERERS GOD WILL JUDGE."

This ought to send chills down the spines of those who play fast and loose with sex, especially those who suppose they can get by with it since they have been saved by grace. Such should remember that the fact that Christ died for their sins makes their sins as believers the more heinous and a greater disgrace to His holy name.

YOUR GLORYING IS NOT GOOD: Ver. 6: "Your glorying<sup>52</sup> is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

Leaven, or yeast, in the Bible, is symbolic of moral or doctrinal evil. When our Lord bade His disciples to beware of "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees," He referred to "the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6,12; cf. Gal. 5:8,9).

Here at Corinth, the believers were tolerating leaven both theological and moral in their midst and the Apostle rebukes them sternly for not recognizing the fact that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump [of dough]." *Do you not know this!*" he exclaims. They boasted of their ability to speak in other tongues, they boasted of their favorite teachers and doubtless of the size of their church, yet they allowed a corrupting influence in their midst which, unchecked, would surely destroy them.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER SACRIFICED FOR US: Vers. 7,8: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The Passover feast of Old Testament times was followed by, or rather expanded into, the feast of Unleavened Bread; i.e., the feast of Unleavened Bread *included* the foregoing Passover Eve (Ex. 12:15,17). In preparation for this whole celebration, every vestige of leaven, or yeast, was to be removed from every Hebrew home for one week. Indeed, those who ate leavened bread at that time were to be "cut off" from the people of Israel (Ex. 12:15-20). This is important, for in I Cor. 10:11 the apostle, referring to Israel's experiences, says:

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<sup>52</sup> Two Greek words are rendered "glory" in the *King James Version*: (1) *doxa*, from which our *doxology*, and synonymous with our English "glory," (2) *kaukaomai*, "to boast." This is the word used here and in I Cor. 1:29; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:9; *et al.*

"These things were written for our learning and admonition."

What a day of rejoicing the annual feast of Passover must, surely *should*, have been, and what continued joy, thanksgiving and rededication at each successive feast of Unleavened Bread! With many Jews still in the Corinthian congregation, the Gentiles doubtless clearly understood the meaning of all this - *and so should we*.

As Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt by the blood of the lamb, shed and applied, so are we saved from the bondage of sin by the shed blood of Christ as we apply it to ourselves. How we should rejoice over this! And how, as the dispensation of grace continues, we should celebrate His death for us with continued joy, thanksgiving and re-dedication!

**PURGE OUT THE OLD LEAVEN:** "Purge out therefore the old leaven," he says, "that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." Is there a contradiction here? If they *were* unleavened, perfectly cleansed from all evil, why need they "purge out the old leaven?" The answer appears as we continue reading: "Ye are unleavened, *for Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*" (Ver. 7).

*In Christ*, and through His finished work in their behalf, they actually were cleansed from all sin (cf. 6:11), but experientially they must "purge out" all evil from themselves, individually and as an assembly, keeping the feast of Unleavened Bread, as it were, "*in sincerity and truth*," with the leaven of the old life carefully "purged out." Thus only can the believer truly enjoy *and celebrate* "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Nor is there anything that will so enhance his testimony for Christ as "*sincerity and truth*."

**THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD:** *1 Cor. 5:9-13*: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators;

"Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat.

"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?"

"But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

**FURTHER CLARIFICATION:** Some have concluded from Ver. 9 that the apostle had written a previous letter to them, but in the light of more complete evidence it

appears that this conclusion may be too hasty. At least, if it is valid one of Paul's epistles must have been lost, and this is highly unlikely. The *Received Text* contains the definite article: *the* epistle," and it may very well be that he refers to this same letter, for the *subject* discussed in "the epistle," is precisely what he had been discussing in *this* letter, but now he would qualify or clarify, his statements somewhat. In Vers. 10,11 he declares that in exhorting them not to have company with fornicators, he was referring to fornicators among them, among professed *believers*. This should have been obvious to his readers for, as he says, if they were not to company with the immoral people of the world, "*then must ye needs go out of the world*" (Ver. 10).

As to the world, even the *wicked* world, about us, God has specially left us here to witness to them about salvation through Christ.

What he had written to the Corinthian saints was that "*if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous,<sup>53</sup> or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat*" (Ver. 11).

Note: there are other sins which, when they become a lifestyle, disqualify one for membership in, or acceptance by, the local church.

This is not the thinking today. The Neo-evangelicals teach that we should get close to "Christians" who live in sin. We should "love" them and try to help them. Invite them to dinner, perhaps, or go with them where they go and do the things they do to promote mutual understanding. This, when God says you should be mourning that he might be taken away from you, that you should not even eat with him, and that you should put away from among yourselves that wicked person. And the result of the arrogant permissiveness of Neo-evangelicalism? Today we are witnessing *the founding of churches for immoral people, and church hierarchies voting favorably to allow homosexuals to be church members and even pastors!* How detrimental and destructive is the "love" we hear so much about in our day! It is certainly not the love of a mother who will risk her own life to defend her child. It is not the love of a father who will chastise his son to save him from evil practices.

Thus the apostle makes it perfectly clear that he is not judging "them that are without." God will judge them. But he makes it equally clear that the local church is responsible for the conduct of "them that are within." "*Do not ye judge them that are within?*" he asks. Of course you do. We Americans judge our own lawbreakers, not the English, French or Italians, simply because we are responsible to keep our own house in order. So with the Church, especially the local church. Thus the apostle continues: "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (Ver. 13).

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<sup>53</sup> Gr., *pleonektes*: to desire passionately what belongs to others.

How important, then, for us, Bible-believing Christians, to live consistently godly lives, both individually and collectively! And how much more would be accomplished in the lives of unbelievers if we believers took this lesson sincerely to heart!

## CHAPTER VI

### *I Corinthians 6:1-20*

THE SAINTS AND THE CIVIL COURTS: *I Cor. 6:1-8*: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?"

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?"

"If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

"I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?"

"But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

"Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."

HOW DARE YOU! We come now upon another of Paul's strong injunctions as to the Believer's separation from the world. Having already pointed out that it is not ours to judge "them that are without," he now declares that neither are we to *go to "them that are without" to be judged*. And he speaks of this with strong feeling. "*Dare any of you,*" he exclaims, "*go to law before the unjust*<sup>54</sup> and not *before the saints?*" That is, How dare you so exalt the world and its unbelieving administrators above spiritual men of God? How dare you imply before the world that there is not one man in your whole congregation competent to settle your little differences, or highly enough respected by both parties to be their arbiter? How dare you spread the "soiled linen" of Christian believers before the world so that they can tell others how these Christians live? How dare you give the enemy this opportunity for slander? How dare you so to dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ and tarnish the glory of His name?

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<sup>54</sup> We, in enlightened lands can expect some measure of justice from unbelieving judges because our laws were originally founded on the God-given Law of Moses, but in pagan lands the courts were - and are - notoriously unjust. In any case, unbelieving judges cannot have the same sense of, or basis for, meeting out even-handed justice as do believers.

WE TO JUDGE THE WORLD AND ANGELS: There are further reasons why the saints should settle their own disputes. "*Do ye not know,*" he exclaims - and he repeats it - "*that the saints shall judge the world*" and "*that we shall judge angels?*" Shall we then descend to the lower courts of unbelief to settle our quarrels with each other?

Many of this world's judges have no concern whatever whether you remain enemies for life. They "couldn't care less" how your dispute affects the Church, or the cause of Christ, or who gets hurt by it.

But we, by the grace of God, are destined to judge both men and angels with righteous judgment. As the 12 apostles of the kingdom will some day reign *with Christ on earth* (Matt. 19:28), and as overcoming believers from the Great Tribulation will be given authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26), so we shall judge, and reign, with Christ, not on earth, but *over the earth*, much as the principalities and powers in heavenly places do today (Eph. 2:2; cf. Dan. 10:12,13,20,21; 12:1). This is why Paul could write in 11 Tim. 2:12: "*If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him,*" and could assure Timothy: "*The Lord shall preserve me ... unto His heavenly kingdom*" (11 Tim. 4:18).

And as to believers *judging angels* (doubtless Satan and his fallen angels), why should there be any question about this? Eph. 1:20,21 could not express more clearly the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and made to sit at God's right hand in heavenly places, "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion and every name<sup>55</sup> that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*" And in Eph. 2:6 he declares that *we believers* have been "*raised with Christ*" and made to sit "*in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" Thus when our Lord judges the angels we will have a part in this.

So here in I Cor. 6:2,3 Paul reproveth the Corinthian Christians: "*Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world. . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels? Are you unworthy, then, [i.e., legitimately unworthy] to judge the smallest matters, and the things that pertain to this life?*"

Here we have some inkling as to why they had not dealt with the base immorality among them. The world's little trinkets were so important to them and the great eternal values so unimportant that they *were indeed* unworthy to settle even the smallest differences that existed among them. As to his question in Ver. 5: "*Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you. . . able to judge between his brethren?*" the answer is, of course, clear. There were wise and godly saints among them, otherwise Paul would not have reproveth them for not appealing to such for help. But the few who should have been respected and appealed to for help, were despised by the "puffed up" majority.

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<sup>55</sup> Or "*Title.*"

It is therefore with at least a tinge of sarcasm that the apostle says in Ver. 4 that if they have "judgments," or, matters to be judged, in things pertaining to this life, they *should* "set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church."

It is clear from Ver. 5 that the Apostle would have men of wisdom and experience, men who are respected by their fellows, to do such judging, but the point is that they evidently did *not* respect these as they should have done and, in any case, these would one day judge the world and angels; why should irresponsible believers consider them incompetent to settle any disputes among them?

SHAME ON YOU! Little wonder he says with feeling, in Vers. 5,6: "*I speak to your shame,*" and continues in Vers. 7,8:

Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, *because ye go to law one with another. Why* do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

"Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."

Mark well: in this passage the apostle does not refer to *doctrinal* disputes but to *personal* disputes, involving material and temporal advantage. Worldly judges would not even understand spiritual matters (cf. [Acts 18:13-15](#)). Thus he declares that *in taking their brethren to court* for personal gain they were losing their cases by default;<sup>56</sup> they had already lost them, defeated spiritually before the cases were even opened. Much more would have been gained by taking wrong and suffering themselves to be defrauded. How this would have enhanced their spiritual stature! "But," he says, "ye do wrong, and defraud, and *that your brethren*" (Ver. 8).

BUT YE ARE WASHED, SANCTIFIED, JUSTIFIED: *I Cor. 6:9-11*: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

"Nor thieves, nor covetous, not drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Do not Vers. 9 and 10 teach salvation by moral conduct? Read in their context they do not; but they do teach that no one will enter heaven with one sin upon his soul. Perhaps a personal experience by the author will serve as an illustration. Years ago we were teaching a class of Sunday School children in a modernistic church in northern New York. We began by asking them the simple question: "How does one get to heaven?" Spontaneously and in unison they answered, "*Be*

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<sup>56</sup> The phrase "*utterly a fault*" (Gr., *hattéma*) has the sense of *losing by default*.

good!" "That's right," we said, "but now another question: Have you been good?" This resulted in a bit of confusion. Some said they *had* been, others acknowledged that *sometimes* they had *not* been, and still others seemed bewildered, even concerned. We then asked one of the smaller boys, "Have you ever told a lie?" to which he replied, "Oh, no." "Have you ever stolen anything, like perhaps a cookie that mother had put away in a jar?" "No," he said again, but his brother interrupted to exclaim, "Yes you did, Johnnie, you know you climbed up and took a cookie out of the jar just yesterday. I saw you." At this Johnnie's face turned red, and he admitted he had on occasion taken things that didn't belong to him, and had even told a lie now and then.

Ah, now the whole picture was changed! *Now* how does one get to heaven? In other words, how does a *sinner* get to heaven?

The way was now opened wide to tell them of the Savior's love and concern for us, His suffering and death *for our sins*, and of forgiveness and justification "according to the riches of His grace."

But let us set this illustration aside for a moment and come back to it later. For after Paul's long list of those who shall *not* "inherit the kingdom of God," he says, "And such *were* some of you" (Ver. 11). Why did he not say, "And such are some of you?" for it was for just such sins as those listed in Vers. 9,10 that he had so sternly rebuked them.

Ah, the above illustration and, indeed, the rest of Ver. 11 explains why he could say to these Corinthians, so stained with sin, "And such WERE some of you." Read the whole verse again and see:

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,<sup>57</sup> but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

It is true: not one who can be designated as those listed in Vers. 9,10 will ever enter the presence of God. But by grace we have been washed, sanctified and justified by the Spirit, through our Lord's redemptive work: "*made accepted in the Beloved*" and pronounced "*complete in Him*" (Eph. 1:6; Col. 2:10).

And this is just why these Corinthians were exhorted to live lives that honored, rather than disgraced, the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle clearly indicates that the very sins for which he had rebuked them were those for which the lost shall perish forever, as they are judged "every man according to his works." But "you," he says, "have been cleansed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and *by the Spirit of our God.*"

There is an interesting sidelight here on the subject of water baptism. When Paul himself was first saved, under the old dispensation, Ananias said to him: "Arise,

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<sup>57</sup> Lit., set apart as sacred to God.

and be *baptized, and wash away thy sins.*" But now, some 30 years later, the apostle writes to the Corinthians, and *by divine inspiration: "ye ARE washed . . . by the Spirit of our God."* What could the rite of water baptism do for them now?

YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN: *1 Cor. 6:12-20:* All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

"Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

"And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power.

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.

"What! know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? for two, saith He, shall be one flesh.

"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

"What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Verse 12 shows us *how grace reigns* in the present dispensation ([Rom. 5:20,21](#)). The apostle declares: "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not productive and I will not be made a slave to any of them.*" Nothing can touch the believer's position in Christ. "If the Son ... shall make you free, ye shall be *free indeed*" (John 8:36), but what a mistake it would be to use this liberty to bring ourselves back into self-inflicted bondage-bondage to sin! This would surely not be taking intelligent advantage of the reign of grace.

Recall the story of blind Bartimaeus. The Lord Jesus had given him his sight, and had said, "*Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.*" Note: "Go thy way," i.e., "go wherever you wish." But see how wisely-and gratefully - Bartimaeus responded! The record states that he "*followed Jesus in the way*" (Mark 10:52). This is how grace works. God's love and mercy to us kindle, or should kindle, in our hearts the desire to know Him better; to draw closer to Him.

Ver. 13 refutes the notion that it is just as legitimate to gratify one's sex appetite as to gratify his appetite for food, since both are normal, physical appetites. But the free gratification of *any* of our fleshly appetites is wrong and harmful. The flesh must be bridled, kept under submission. Further, "the body is not for fornication [any more than for gluttony], but *for the Lord*; and the Lord for the body." He has *sanctified* us, set us apart as *sacred to Himself*, for He *loves* us. How important, then, for those who would be true to Christ to practice self-discipline, and not abandon themselves to the gratification of the flesh! Thus Paul exhorts us in I Thes. 4:3:

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that we should abstain from fornication."<sup>58</sup>

And in 11 Cor. 11:2:

"I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

GOD WILL RAISE US UP: Read alone, out of its context, Ver. 14 would appear to refer to the future resurrection of the saints, but examined in its context it holds for us a precious truth concerning - not the distant, but the immediate future. Read it again:

"And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power."

Think, where else in Paul's epistles do we find our Lord's resurrection associated with *the power of God*? Surely one of the first verses to come to mind is Rom. 1:4, where we read that our Lord was:

". . . declared to be the Son of God *with power* . . . by the *resurrection from the dead*."

Then, in Eph. 1:18-20, the apostle refers to his prayer for the saints, that:

"The eyes of your understanding [may be] enlightened; that ye may know what is . . . *the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe*, according to the working of *His mighty power*,

*"Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places....."*

Thus *we*, as well as Christ Himself, are involved in that mighty demonstration of power; it is extended *"to us-ward"*. Indeed, 2:5,6 goes on to explain that:

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<sup>58</sup> Gr., *porneia*, illicit sexual intercourse.

"Even when we were dead in sins [God] hath *quicken*ed us [given us life] together with Christ...

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Thus, having died and been buried *with Christ* (Rom. 6:3,4), it is God's will that:

". . . like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, EVEN SO we also should *walk in newness of life*" (Ver. 4).

Ah, the resurrection life of Christ! God, in His grace will give us the power to live it if, like Paul, we truly long to "know Him, and *the power of His resurrection*" (Phil. 3:10).

This, surely, is what he refers to in Phil. 3:11, in the phrase, "that I might *attain* unto the resurrection of the dead." The word "attain" clearly implies that he does not speak here of a future resurrection, but of a resurrection life to be attained to, and enjoyed, during this present earthly sojourn. He emphasizes this fact by acknowledging that he has not yet fully attained; that he is not yet perfect (Ver. 12). But this is the "prize" he daily seeks to gain (Vers. 13,14).

Finally, in Rom. 8:11 the apostle declares that if the Spirit of God, who "*raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,*" that same spirit, dwelling in you, "*shall also quicken your mortal bodies.*"<sup>59</sup>

And he adds:

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh,<sup>60</sup> to live after the flesh" (Ver. 14).

How can we leave this blessed subject without adding Col. 3:1-3?

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

"For ye are dead, and your life [i.e., your new life] is hid with Christ in God."

**THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST:** Another strong argument against licentious living by Christians is found in Vers. 15-18. We are *the members of Christ* and it is an abominable thing to take the members of Christ and subject them to moral

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<sup>59</sup> The argument being, that if the Spirit of God could raise Christ from the *dead*, surely He can "quicken" your *mortal* bodies and give them needed strength to overcome sin.

<sup>60</sup> But to the Spirit, who indwells us, always ready to help.

pollution. As Albert Barnes put it: "Shall that which is a part, as it were, of the pure and holy Savior, be prostituted to impure and unholy embraces?" Should he who has been joined to Christ as one in a blessed spiritual relationship, now become one with a harlot in a vile and immoral relationship?

The words "one spirit" in Ver. 17 are beautiful, used as they are in a similar sense to that in which a man and his wife are "one flesh," in a close and intimate union of feeling, spirit, intention, disposition. The argument is sublime. As the union of souls is more important than the union of bodies; more enduring and precious; so - and infinitely more so - is the union of the spirit with Christ, infinitely more holy and precious than any human ties, so that it is the more degrading a sin for the Christian to join himself to another in an immoral relationship, polluting, not merely things that are without, but the body itself, for licentious living still dissipates one's energies, producing weakness, feebleness, disease and worse - and bringing hideous disgrace on the name of our blessed Lord.

Little wonder the apostle adds to his "*God forbid!*" Or "*May it not be!*" the warning: "*Flee fornication!*" (Ver. 18). *Flee!* and escape the dreadful consequences of desecrating your high and holy calling, and your Lord's high and holy name.

Finally, the apostle urges moral sanctity from the fact that the believer's body is "*the temple of the Holy Ghost,*" to be dedicated not to self but to God.

"What? know ye not that your body is *the temple* at the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and *ye are not your own?*"

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

In the present "dispensation of the grace of God" the Holy Spirit does not *take possession* of God's people and cause them to walk in His will as He did at Pentecost (cf. [Ezek. 36:27](#) and [Acts 2:4](#)). Nor does He remove those influences which would tempt us to sin, but He does, by His Spirit *dwell within* each believer (Ver. 19, above), to provide needed guidance and the strength to withstand temptation, and we may avail ourselves of this provision at any time by faith.

Thus, says the apostle, "Ye are not your own" - ye are *His*. "For ye are bought with a price" - and such a price - that your body may become a *temple*, a sacred abode for God Himself!

A temple, remember, is not a mere building, or even a beautiful building. Rather it is a *sacred shrine*, where men take off their hats and kneel and pray to whatever god they worship. Thus the Christian's body is a sacred shrine to God - the true God: a place where He should be loved, adored and worshipped. As I Cor. 3:16 puts it: "*Ye are the temple of God, and ... the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.*"

THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD: "*Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (Ver. 20).

This again is not only *Paul's* word to the Corinthian congregation; it is also *God's* Word to us - each of us individually. Are our lives such; is our testimony such, that when men come into contact with us they feel that they have been in contact with God? If our bodies are truly the temples of God, places where God is loved and worshipped, then surely those who come into contact with us should feel that they have been in contact with God. How much prayer, and prayerful study of the Word, are still due from the best of us where this is concerned - for how else shall He become more and more the one sacred occupant of our bodies, and make them temples of God indeed?

God grant that we, surrounded as we are by teeming millions of unbelievers may be indeed *temples* of God, where He is loved and worshipped, and His sacred presence recognized by all.

## CHAPTER VII

### *I Corinthians 7:1-40*

GOD AND MARRIED LIFE: *I Cor. 7:1-9*: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

"The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

"But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

"For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

"I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

"But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN HOME: How touching is the grace of God in stepping into the Christian home, as it were, and giving instructions as to how this home may be blessed and spiritually fruitful.

In Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1 and I Pet. 3:1-7 we find such instructions. In the chapter we now consider, however, he deals specifically with the marriage relationship, a subject which surely needs Scriptural consideration in the day in which we live.

THE THINGS WHEREOF YE WROTE UNTO ME: *I Corinthians 7:1*: They had obviously written a letter posing questions about marriage, divorce, remarriage and related subjects. Why had the apostle taken so long to get to their questions? Why deal first with so many other subjects? The author, having carried on a rather heavy correspondence for some 50 years, feels he has a simple answer to this question. So often we have had to answer, not basically what the writer asks, but the *need* his letter expresses, or betrays. Recall how the Samaritan woman, faced

with the Lord's, "*Go, call thy husband,*" turned the conversation to academic matters (John 4:19-25) - obviously to divert attention from the sin in her life. This is often done by people who seek help with their problems, but are loathe to face up to the sin that has caused them. We doubt not that this was so with the Corinthians and that this is why Paul first deals with the gross permissiveness among them.

IT IS GOOD FOR A MAN NOT TO TOUCH A WOMAN: *I Cor. 7:1*: The word here rendered "touch" (Gr., *haptomai*), has been variously rendered, "embrace," "*grasp hold of,*" "*lay hold of,*" "*take hold of,*" etc., by commentators. However, this Greek word, used 36 times, is *always* rendered "touch" in KJV. There are no exceptions and, indeed, in many or most of its occurrences it *could not* be translated in any other way.

Paul's statement does not express nor does it imply a negative attitude toward marriage or cast any reflections upon the married state. A recognition of this fact will deliver us from the temptation to alter Paul's words so as to water down his meaning.

This statement *does* cast reflections, however, upon the loose attitude of their men toward women and the sacredness of womanhood. It was very proper that the apostle should open his discussion on married life with such a statement where such conditions existed. Then, with a "nevertheless, he proceeds to deal with the subject at hand.

TRUE MARRIED LIFE: *I Cor. 7:2-4*: It is clear from this passage that the apostle does not advocate celibacy, either for the clergy or the laity. Indeed, he does not even advocate what has been called ascetic celibacy or married celibacy - except under exceptional circumstances and *when* mutually agreed upon for a temporary period of time (Ver. 5).

It should be observed that the words "to avoid," in Ver. 2 are in italics, hence were supplied by the translators. The *Received Text*, however, simply has the words *dia de* (None of the five Greek words for "avoid" is used), so that the sense is probably "on account of the," that is, on account of the problem with fornication "*let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*"

He does not suggest, of course, that all of the unmarried should now quickly find mates and get married. Rather, he condemns the promiscuity among them and directs that (1) each married person should have "*his* (or her) *own*" mate, and (2) that others who, as we shall see, *ought* to be married, now likewise commit themselves to one, "*his own*" mate.

It must not be overlooked further, that with immorality so prevalent at Corinth, one who remained single, or in a widowed state, might be suspected of doing so in order to carry on love affairs at will.

One thing is clear: the Word of God here condemns polygamy, "wife swapping," trial marriages, free love and all the immoral practices so prevalent in our own day.

Paul was not a prude, however, nor did he teach that marriage was a questionable accommodation to avoid the worst sins. The ensuing verses (3,4) make this abundantly clear.

The "due *benevolence*" (Gr., *eunoian*) which the husband and the wife are to render to each other (Ver. 3) refer to their living together *as husband and wife*. See [Ex. 21:10](#), where this is spoken of as "the duty of marriage." In the ideal marriage the husband and wife *give themselves to each other*, physically as well as spiritually.

The word "Power" (Gr., *exousiazō*), in Ver. 4, does not refer to physical power, but to *authority* as in [Matt. 28:18](#); [Mark 2:10](#), *et al.* By the marriage contract this "authority" over one's body is transferred to one's *mate*. Both are to regard themselves as united to each other in the most intimate union and in the most tender ties. Each gives himself to the other.

It is evident from this that Paul does not teach married celibacy - unless it be by *mutual consent, for a brief period of time, and for some significant purpose*:

MARRIED CELIBACY? *I Cor. 7:5*: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

Obviously two parties would not *agree to defraud* one another. This shows that the Greek *apostereo*, usually rendered "defraud," can also mean "deprive." The one married partner is not to deprive the other of normal conjugal relations, *except temporarily, for some important reason - when mutually agreed upon*. This period is evidently not to be prolonged, "lest Satan tempt you," and your good intentions "backfire."

Some misguided Christians think that they are very saintly if they live with their mates as though unmarried, but such should beware lest the one be responsible for the infidelity of the other. A beautiful passage on happy married life is found in *I Pet. 3:7*:

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

Returning to *I Cor. 7:5,6*, it is evident that Paul by no means *commands* this interruption of conjugal relations, but only *permits*<sup>61</sup> it - with certain qualifications.

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<sup>61</sup> Gr., *Sungnome*, a concession; not from God to Paul to write this, however, but a concession to married Corinthian believers to do what is discussed in Ver. 5.

Indeed, he even adds a word of caution against prolonging the idea: "*lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency,*" i.e., lest evil thoughts and desires fill your mind and your continency become incontinency.

EVERY MAN HIS PROPER GIFT: *1 Cor. 7:7*: "For I would that all men were even as I myself."

Not that he wished that all men were unmarried or widows, for this would violate both the divine institution of marriage and his own inspired instructions elsewhere (*1 Tim. 5:14*). Rather he expresses the wish that all were able to contain their passions as, by the grace of God, he had been able to do. This is the evident meaning in the light of what follows:

"But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that."

Thus the apostle recognizes that while for some the unmarried state presents no problem at all, these are in the minority, so that where this does present a problem "Let them marry" (Ver. 9). Doubtless Ver. 7 refers back to both Ver. 1 and Ver. 5, for both require a measure of self control.

THE UNMARRIED AND WIDOWS: *1 Cor. 7:8*: "I say therefore ... it is good for them if they abide even as I."

It appears that the apostle refers here to all adults who were unmarried at the time. But why does he particularly specify the "widows"? Perhaps this is because he deals specifically with virgins at Vers. 25-40, so brings the widows in here.

It should be carefully noted, however, that here again the apostle does not promote celibacy for all, but only for those who, like himself, had no need to be married. And no doubt he makes this statement as he does other statements in this chapter, with "the present distress" and persecution in view (Ver. 26) and, under these circumstances, to encourage a life wholly devoted to Christ, unencumbered with family cares (Vers. 32-35).

To state it in another way: it would be good for those who were endowed, as he was, with the gift of self-restraint, to remain unmarried, but where this was not the case, says, "Let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn." As we say, however, even this was doubtless written in the context of "the present distress." Paul had experienced personally how persecution had raged in the Corinthian metropolis (*Acts 18:6-12; 1 Cor. 2:3; 11 Cor. 7:5*). Indeed, if it is true, as secular history records, that Nero was in Corinth at this time, having gone to the Olympian games (Corinth was the home of the Olympics) so as to escape assassination in Rome, Paul's term, "the present distress," takes on the greater significance and explains more clearly the apostle's paternal attitude toward the believers there (Cf. Vers. 28, 32,35).

Persecution aside, however, this whole passage emphasizes the importance of avoiding immorality, or even what may be construed as such, and on showing to the world the wholesomeness of Christian marriage.

Let not our young people make the mistake of supposing that marriage is meant just for the gratification of the fleshly desires, or that it is a "fun thing," meant to give some kind of thrill. This is what makes for *unhappy* marriages, often ending in divorce, with all its bitterness and heartache.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE: *I Cor. 7:10-16*: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband.

"But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

"And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

"For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband: or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

I COMMAND, YET NOT I, BUT THE LORD: It is strange that some teachers of the Word use Paul's phrases: "*I have received of the Lord*" (I Cor. 11:23; 15:3), and, "*this we say unto you by the word of the Lord*" (I Thes. 4:15), to emphasize his revelation ministry. But here in I Cor. 7:10 they apply similar phraseology to what our Lord commanded *while on earth*. A careful examination of the apostle's words reveals that this is not his meaning. Rather he speaks here *as an apostle*: "*I command, yet not I, but the Lord.*" And where the opposite is the case he does not say, "I find nothing in Scripture," but "*I have no commandment from the Lord*" (Ver. 25).

Here in Vers. 10,11 then, we have a commandment from the Lord Himself. The wife is not to "depart" from her husband, and the husband is not to "put away" his wife.

"But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."

But why is this special imposition to "remain unmarried," applied to the wife alone and not to the husband? The answer is that it *is* also applied to the husband, for the closing words of Ver. 11 indicate that the whole command applies to the husband as well as to the wife. Also perhaps wives more than husbands are apt to find married life almost unbearable. Thus the apostle, realizing that there may be great pressures upon the wife to "depart from her husband," declares that if she does not have the grace to obey this command she is to "*remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband*" (assuming he is still unmarried, of course). Thus the believer who toys with the idea of divorcing his (or her) mate, had better think it over carefully and prayerfully a thousand times. When did our Lord on earth ever add such an imposition as the above to His declarations as to divorce? This is a command from the *glorified* Lord through Paul.

A PUZZLING PROBLEM: Verses 12,25 and 40 of I Cor. 7, though they have puzzled many a Bible student, have not caused a great deal of discussion among commentators, but rather a great deal of *silence*, and sometimes evasion. We urge the reader to *read* these verses before continuing with our commentary.

In no way do we mean to detract from the blessings we have received from the writings of able teachers of the Word, but it does seem that many of them have simply declined to tackle the questions raised by these verses, so that those who have gone to these writers for help on the subject have failed to find it.

Perhaps this is due to the fact that in commenting on such passages one is apt to commit himself unwittingly to grave error. This we must carefully avoid as we seek, by God's help, to offer a consistent and Scriptural solution to the problem.

One leading commentator who does deal with the subject at some length is George Williams, author of *The Student's Commentary On the Holy Scriptures*. Williams was a truly great man of God, and his *Student's Commentary* has long been one of the author's favorites. However, in dealing with the above subject he demonstrates how easy it is to commit oneself unwittingly to grave error, involving even the inspiration of the Scriptures. In commenting on I Cor. 7:6<sup>62</sup> he makes this astonishing statement:

"Here is to be distinguished the difference between spiritual thoughts and inspiration.... So in his [Paul's] Epistles everything is inspired except where otherwise stated (Ver. 12)."

Did George Williams, then, question the plenary inspiration of the Bible? Did he deny that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God. . ." (II Tim. 3:16)? Did he believe that there are portions of the Holy Bible which are *not* the Word of God? Surely not. But his interpretation of I Cor. 7:6 certainly gives this impression.

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<sup>62</sup> As we have seen, Ver. 6 does not even belong in the same category as Vers. 12,25 and 40, but refers rather to a *concession* made to the *Corinthian believers*.

Happily (*in this case*) he indulges in self-contradiction when he says further on:

"It is clear, therefore, that the Apostle knew he was inspired when writing his Epistles. He affirms their inspiration" (Ibid).

This after asserting that everything in Paul's Epistles is inspired "*except where otherwise stated*"!

As a matter of fact, this author knows of no evidence from Scripture to the effect that Paul *always knew* when he wrote by inspiration. 11 Tim. 4:13 is only one of many passages which should be considered in this connection. This verse, like every other verse of Scripture *is divinely inspired*; it is God's Word. But was Paul *aware* of this when, from his prison in Rome, he wrote to Timothy asking him to bring "the cloak that I left at Troas," and "the books" and "the parchments"? Was it as "the Word of the Lord" that these requests were to be taken, or was it simply a personal request, which now is seen also to be part of the Word of God, given for our profit? Few indeed would naturally come to the *former* conclusion. Evidently it was a *personal* request and, though inspired of God, stands out in striking contrast to those passages in which Paul categorically says, "*Thus saith the Lord.*"

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES: In solving this problem it may help us to reflect that Jesus Christ, the living Word, was not *only* God, nor was He *only* man, nor yet was He *partly* God and *partly* man. He was *wholly* God and *wholly* man, though not sinful man. This may be impossible for us, in our finite state, to understand, but there is overwhelming evidence that it is so.

So it is with the Bible, the *written* Word. It was not written *only* by God, nor *only* by man, nor even *partly* by both. It was written *wholly* by God and *wholly* by man.

All Scripture is *the Word of God* ("God-breathed," II Tim. 3:16), and this becomes increasingly evident to those who give themselves objectively to the study of its contents. Everywhere it abounds with evidence that *God* was its author. Its fulfilled prophecies, its sublime harmony, its power to regenerate and transform lives, the authority with which it speaks, never deigning to defend its divine authorship, but rather *assuming* it: all this stamps it as the Book of God - in addition to the many passages where its divine authorship is solemnly declared.

But the Bible was also written by men - all of it. Matthew, the politician, wrote about Christ as King. Luke the physician, proved He was true man. And Luke says, "I had a complete understanding of these things from the beginning" (Luke 1:3), implying that he was *qualified* to write "in order" about our Lord's ministry on earth. Paul says, "*Behold, I Paul say unto you. . .*" (Gal. 5:2), implying that *his* saying it should bear weight with his readers. And the freedom with which these men wrote is manifest in many passages as, for example, II Tim. 4:13, referred to above, and the closing verses of those letters in which Paul sends personal

greetings to, or from, his friends. Surely he had no idea at the time that in these things he was writing the Word of God. Such is the wonder of inspiration!

INSPIRATION AND REVELATION: Thus the questions posed by I Cor. 7:12,25 and 40 do not involve a difference between divine inspiration and the "spiritual thoughts" of men. Rather they involve the difference between *inspiration and revelation*.

The fact must not be overlooked that Paul received his special message by *revelation* from the glorified Lord in heaven. Hear his own testimony as to this:

"For I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man . . . . *but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Gal 1:11, 12).

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

*"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery..."*(Eph. 3:1-3).

Thus with regard to the rapture of the Body to be with Christ, he says, *"This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord"* (I Thes. 4:15), and concerning the celebration of the Lord's supper he says, *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you"* (I Cor. 11:23).

But here in I Cor. 7:12 he says, *"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord."* This does not deny the divine inspiration of his words. He simply means: "This is not part of the revelation I have received from the Lord." Indeed, in Ver. 25 he confirms this interpretation by his statement: "Now concerning virgins, *I have no commandment of the Lord. . . .*" Here the thought of inspiration does not even enter in, but rather that of *"the revelation of Jesus Christ"* to him.

That *everything* in Paul's epistles was divinely inspired is emphasized not only in 11 Tim. 3:16, but also in 11 Pet. 3:16, where "all his [Paul's] epistles" are called *"the Scriptures"*, "which unbelievers "wrest ... to their own destruction."

But as we have seen above, it is also evident, especially from I Cor. 7, that all Paul wrote is not to be included in the special revelation he received from the Lord in glory.

Perhaps this will help to crystallize the thinking of some of our readers along this line before we proceed with our studies in this great chapter.

THE MIXED MARRIAGE: *I Cor. 7:12-16:*

Note carefully the words "sanctified" and "holy" in Ver. 14. Both come from the same Greek root *hagiazō*, "to set apart as sacred." Thus the believing spouse in a mixed marriage (where one believes and the other does not) performs a very important role in the home, for the believer sets the household apart as one where Christ is known.<sup>63</sup> Whether the husband or the wife is the Christian, the house will be set apart and known by others as one where Christ is loved and worshipped. Even the children are thus "sanctified," and "holy," set apart by the presence of a believing father or mother. Blessed is the child who has had at least one sincere Christian for a parent. Doubly blessed are those whose parents both know Christ and seek to bring their children up to know Him.

Thus the believer should not seek a divorce from his unbelieving mate. But what if the *unbeliever*, perhaps hating the things of God that constantly confront him, insists on a divorce from his wife? In that case, says the apostle, do not contest the divorce but "let him depart," adding "*A brother or a sister is not under bondage,*<sup>64</sup> *in such cases; but God hath called us to peace*"<sup>65</sup> (Ver. 15).

As to the believer's effort to keep even his mixed marriage intact, the apostle asks, "How do you know whether God might use you for the salvation of your mate?" In his long ministry for the Lord the author has known many such cases - where a heartbroken wife, for example, witnessed and prayed for her husband to be saved, all seemingly in vain, until he too came to know the Lord! Such marriages are generally blessed beyond measure after that. Yet, God knows better than we how "circumstances alter cases," and graciously leaves the above as an exhortation from one who has given his all for Christ, rather than as a direct command which might prove "too heavy to bear." (See Ver. 17).

LET EVERY MAN ABIDE IN HIS CALLING: *I Cor. 7:17-24*: "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

"Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

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<sup>63</sup> We are not to assume from this that God approves the believer's entering into marriage with an unbeliever. See II Cor. 6:14: "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*"

<sup>64</sup> Obviously, bondage to the marriage vow.

<sup>65</sup> Not peace of heart for the believer here, but peace *in the home*. A home constantly rent by dispute and disagreement is hardly a good testimony to the cause of Christ.

"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

RACE AND RELIGION: One of the chief causes of unhappiness among the Corinthian believers was that which concerned *race and religion* (Vers. 18-20).

As we know, the Corinthian church had its beginning in a Jewish synagogue. Thus some of the Corinthians evidently felt that the Jews among them had a certain authenticity about them that the Gentiles did *not* have. Some of them even wanted to become circumcised and join, as it were, the Hebrew race.

Many of the Jews, on the other hand, felt that *their* position was a hindrance to *them*. They had heard Paul's wonderful message of grace to all nations and had come to rejoice in the glorious liberty of believers in Christ, entirely apart from circumcision or the Law. Since the Gentiles at Corinth still naturally looked upon these as Jews, some of them were tempted to become *uncircumcised*, evidently by a surgical operation, so as to sever themselves completely from Judaism and the Law.

This is why the Apostle wrote to both: "*Stay as you are,*" adding:

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" [i.e., obedience to *Him*]" (Vers. 18,19).

And he adds for emphasis:

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (Ver. 20).

Circumcision was, of course, the basic religious rite of Judaism. It was the ceremony that separated the people of Israel from the licentious Gentiles about them. But now Israel had been cast out, along with the Gentiles, into the arms of grace:

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, *that He might have mercy upon all*" (Rom. 11:32).

Thus when some of the believing Pharisees at the great council at Jerusalem, declared that it was necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and command them to keep the Law of Moses, Paul "*gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with [the Gentile believers]*" (Gal. 2:5).

Anyway, Paul had already established the fact that "*he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh*" (Rom. 2:28). Christianity is a spiritual, not a physical matter:

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been *baptized into Jesus Christ have put on Christ.*<sup>66</sup>

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for *ye are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:26-28).

THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY: The Greek *doulos*, used four times in Vers. 21-24 does not denote voluntary or hired service as does *diakonos*, but forced service: slavery. This too posed a significant problem to the Corinthian believers. But why was Paul even asked about this? Did *he* believe in slavery? Of course he did not, but first let us consider the conditions involved in slavery in those days.

In Paul's day men were held as slaves for various reasons. Some, indeed, were bought at slave markets. Others were acquired in war and were felt to be the legitimate spoils of conquest. Still others (including *some* of those bought at the slave markets) served as slaves to pay off debts - the results of bankruptcy cases.

Hebrew and Roman laws were not as lax as our modern American laws where bankruptcy is concerned. A man could not waste his funds in reckless business enterprises and then leave his debts unpaid simply by going into bankruptcy. If an Israelite found himself unable to continue in business because of unpaid debts, he either declared himself bankrupt or was declared bankrupt by his creditors. He was then sold (or sold himself) to someone who was financially in a position to meet his obligations for him, and he generally worked without wages for this master until his account was settled. This was so also under Roman law and this is where the Scriptural law of the *Kinsman Redeemer* originated, for a wealthy Jewish kinsman could redeem the slave from bondage by paying his debt for him ([Lev. 25:47,48](#)).

There were then, various reasons for slavery, but legitimate or illegitimate, *the condition existed* in Paul's day. Now what should be done about it?

Does the apostle cry, "*Rise and Rebel! Assert your rights?*" This is the cry on every hand today, even in much less aggravated cases of injustice, but as a result great bitterness and deep hatreds are being engendered. Certainly this approach to the problem of injustice is *not* based on the Word of God. *There* we read: "Bondmen, *obey in all things your masters according to the flesh.*" And this obedience, we read further, should be sincere and from the heart: "*not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart . . . heartily, as to the Lord. .*

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<sup>66</sup> This must forever do away with the notion that baptism by water is referred to here.

. (Col. 3:22,23). Four times in Col. 3:22-24, the apostle makes it clear that in faithfully serving one's master he is serving the Lord.

Before God the believing bonds slave occupies a position not one whit lower than that of his master. Thus, here in I Cor. 7:21-23, Paul suggests that should a slave be presented with an opportunity to be free he should take advantage of it. But if in bondage, he says, "Care not for it." Today we might say, "Think nothing of it."

"For he that is called in the Lord being a servant, *is the Lord's freeman*;<sup>67</sup> *likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ's servant.*"<sup>68</sup>

How could this be made clearer? It is *the Lord* who asks the believing bonds slave, "*Do this for Me*," for the One who loved you and bought you with His own life's blood. It is from *this* standpoint that Paul exhorts: "*Be not ye the servants of men*" (Ver. 23). Thus actually the bonds slave is not in bondage to any *man*, but to *Christ*, who has bought *both* servant and master with His precious blood, that they might be *His* loving, willing bonds slaves.

Does the master mistreat his bonds slave? Then the bonds slave is asked to bear this for the time being and is reminded that while *he* will soon receive a rich reward from his true Master, "he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done: and [*with God*] *there is no respect of persons*" (Col. 3:24,25).

Remember, Paul himself was well acquainted with the worst form of bondage: imprisonment in chains. And when he stood, humiliated, before Agrippa, he made it clear that he did not enjoy this bondage. Yet he overflowed with joy *despite* the chains he wore, as is evident from his response to Agrippa's "*Almost thou persuadest me*," and his testimony before a crowded courtroom. Hear the victorious prisoner:

"I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29).

And thus the apostle repeats his exhortation:

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God" (Ver. 24).

"*With God!*" There is the key to the whole problem of Christian suffering. We think of a verse from a hymn written long ago by John Newton:

While blest with a sense of His love,  
A palace a toy would appear;  
And prisons would palaces prove  
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

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<sup>67</sup> I.e., he is serving his master out of *love for Christ*; it is his *wish to* so please Christ.

<sup>68</sup> I.e., he is *Christ's* bonds slave, bound by love and duty to serve Him.

CONCERNING VIRGINS: I Cor. 7:25-28: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

"I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

"But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you."

I GIVE MY JUDGMENT: Paul had "no commandment from the Lord" relating to virgins under the then-present circumstances. Indeed, probably no fixed rule could be laid down which might not lead to license on the one hand, or undue restraint on the other. Thus the apostle gives only his judgment (Ver. 25), based on the conditions at Corinth at that time. And he adds that those who do not follow his advice are not necessarily guilty of any wrongdoing. As to the question of the inspiration of his advice in this matter, see notes on Verse 12.

THE PRESENT DISTRESS: At first sight it seems odd that the apostle should bring up the subject of virgins, only to turn back immediately to that of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Some have held that it may be that he refers to *all* that have never had sexual intercourse outside of marriage (See [Rev. 14:4](#)), but this is highly improbable in the light of the fact that he specifically deals with the married, the unmarried and virgins in this chapter.

The key to the problem is evidently found in the phrase, "*the present distress*" (Ver. 26). With persecution raging and the prospect still more alarming (Vers. 29-31), it is quite natural that he should *introduce* his advice concerning virgins by alluding to what he had said about the single state in general. Thus he says:

"I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say,<sup>69</sup> that it is good for a man<sup>70</sup> so to be"<sup>71</sup> (Ver. 26).

The exhortation to the married man not to seek to be loosed from his wife, reminds us that this had already been *commanded* in Ver. 10, though there the injunction is applied to the wife. This passage surely teaches that if a married person departs from his mate, he, or she, is *never to marry again*. One commentator adds the words: "i.e., until after her husband has died. Then she may be married to another." But the passage does not say this. It says: "Let her

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<sup>69</sup> Note. "*For the present distress, I say.*" Thus this advice was *not* meant to be a permanent rule.

<sup>70</sup> "Man," Gr. *anthropos*, "person."

<sup>71</sup> To remain unmarried, as Paul was, provided he had the self control to do so (I Cor. 7:6-9).

*remain unmarried.*" The commentator based his statement on Ver. 39: "*but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.*" But this is hardly legitimate, for it ignores the first part of the statement: "*The wife is bound by the law so long as her husband liveth.*" But in this case she did not remain bound by the law to her husband so long as he lived, thus at his death she has no claim to the freedom granted to bereaved wives who have remained with their husbands until death. Thus if she does marry again in such a case, she does so in disobedience to the command: "*Let her remain unmarried.*" To the sincere believer this must be a strong deterrent to divorcing one's mate.

This leads us to the case of the one who has been "loosed from" his or her, mate.

"... Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife, but and if thou marry, thou has not sinned....."

Note carefully the words "loosed from," not "have you *loosed yourself* from a wife." This clearly refers to the person *whom his mate has divorced*. He did not wish a divorce. He wanted the marriage to continue, but she insisted otherwise and obtained (directly or indirectly) a divorce, and so the man has now been "loosed from" a wife. This cannot refer to an unmarried man, for an unmarried man has never been "*loosed from a wife.*" He simply does not have one. But the person described in Ver. 27 has been "*loosed from a wife*" and this is the party whose plight has so often been overlooked in discussions on the divorce and remarriage question.<sup>72</sup>

A careful study of Vers. 12-15 will give us some insight into the plight of the one who has thus been "loosed from" a mate. And such, says the apostle in both Ver. 15 (where the *unbeliever* has departed) and Vers. 27,28 (where the *believer* is involved), may marry again without any stigma of wrongdoing;<sup>73</sup> See Ver. 15, "*not under bondage in such cases*" and Vers. 27,28, "*thou hast not sinned.*"

NOW CONCERNING VIRGINS: I Cor. 7:25,28: His argument here is simply that if a man who is still unmarried is free to marry and one who has been "loosed from" a mate is free to marry,<sup>74</sup> then surely a virgin is free to marry.<sup>75</sup> The reason he suggests to all that they remain unmarried if possible is clearly because of "the present distress." Note his continued reference to this:

THE TIME IS SHORT: I Cor. 7:28-33: Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I *spare you*.

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<sup>72</sup> As we have seen, this applies also to the woman who has been "loosed from" a husband.

<sup>73</sup> We realize that sin complicates matters, but God here draws the *basic distinction* between the one who *did* the "departing," or obtained the divorce (directly or indirectly) and the one who sought, with whatever failure, to keep the family together.

<sup>74</sup> All other things being equal.

<sup>75</sup> The *virgin daughter* is discussed in Vers. 36-38.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

"And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

"And they that use this world, as not abusing<sup>76</sup> it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

"But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

"But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."

The above words by the Apostle Paul agree with the many evidences that he never expected that the "dispensation of the grace of God" might last for more than 1900 years. He expected to be alive at the Lord's coming for His own after a brief and wonderful opportunity for a sin-cursed world ([I Cor. 15:52](#); [I Thes. 4:17](#)). Thus here he describes conditions which will prevail during the Tribulation period and "*will*" begin to prevail even before that "*time*."

War and persecution are always distracting. At such times many married couples must live as though they did not have each other. Even "weeping" and "rejoicing" are overshadowed by greater considerations, and things purchased cannot be enjoyed as at other times. [I Tim. 2:1-4](#) also makes it clear that war and civil turmoil are *hindrances* to the proclamation of the gospel. At such times men are preoccupied, it seems, with everything but the gospel.

Thus, in advising the unmarried to remain so if possible, the apostle would have them without "carefulness," or anxiety (Ver. 32), and also, if possible, more free to serve the Lord without distraction under difficult circumstances.

Stephen Shober has caught the gist of this whole passage from Ver. 12 to 40, in the following statement: "If single stay single, if married stay married, if loosed stay loosed, if a slave remain in slavery unless *set* free, if circumcised do not become uncircumcised, if uncircumcised do not become circumcised. The intent of the teaching was for each person to conduct his life in such a manner that it would not create needless anxiety, stress or grief during this particular time."

Still the fast-changing character of this world's relationships and experiences should warn believers of every generation not to let them take unwarranted hold upon their hearts. We can use this world only to a limited degree. Its joys and sorrows, its tranquility and trouble, affect us whether we wish it or not. Were we living in the kingdom reign of Christ, our attitude would be different. Then believers

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<sup>76</sup> Or, "not making full use of it."

will not be restrained from the full use and enjoyment of the world, for "the kingdoms of this world" will then be "*the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ*" (Rev. 11:15). Then it will be *good* to be worldly, for this world will then be *His* world! But this present "world system" is bitterly hostile to God, and interest in it is calculated to interfere with our fellowship with Him and the joy of participating in the accomplishment of *His* glorious purpose for us.

THE WIFE AND THE VIRGIN: *I Cor. 7:34,35*: "There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

"And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."

What the apostle has said with regard to married men and those who remain unmarried, applies also to married women and those women who remain unmarried. The same distinction applies. She who remains unmarried, the virgin, can dedicate both body and spirit to the Lord, while the married woman must "take care of her husband," as we would put it today.

Again the apostle makes it plain that he would not "cast a snare [a net]" about young women to restrain them from being married, but that he would (again, in view of "the present distress") help them if possible to serve the Lord without the distractions of family cares.

THE VIRGIN DAUGHTER: *I Cor. 7:36-38*: "But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

"Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

"So then, he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better."

Some of the words and phrases in this passage might lead one to suppose that the question hinges upon whether the *father* finds it hard to act modestly, or with proper decorum toward his daughter as she comes of age. There is too much evidence to the contrary, however, to make this interpretation tenable.

The word "them," in Ver. 36, shows that the father might be acting "uncomely" i.e., *unfairly* or *unreasonably* toward his unmarried daughter if *she*, having "passed

the flower of her age," and having, evidently, fallen in love with some man, is not now permitted to marry him.<sup>77</sup>

The phrase "standeth steadfast in his heart," stands opposed to the disposition of one who is vacillating and unsettled, and the apostle evidently has in mind the father's opposition to the marriage because the young man involved in this case, is not a believer, or any other valid reason whatsoever. In such a case he does well *not* to give his consent. Indeed, Ver. 38 would appear to indicate that this is the father's reasoning:

"So then, he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better."

ONLY IN THE LORD: *1 Cor. 7:39,40*: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; *only in the Lord*."

"But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

Mark well: *bound by the law as long as her husband liveth*." This is not less so, but *especially* so during the present "dispensation of the grace of God." In this dispensation there is no ground for obtaining a divorce. The marriage tie is binding for life. The "writing of divorcement" that Moses gave the hard-hearted sons of Israel is no rule for us. And even the one exception, fornication, which our Lord allowed, was based on the fact that Jehovah's wife, Israel, had to be divorced because of her many adulteries. Thank God, she will be restored and reunited again to her true Husband ([Jer. 3:20](#); cf. [Isa. 54:5-8](#)).

As to the apostle's "judgment" that the widows will be happier if they remain unmarried, it is fraught with significance to hear Paul, godly father that he was, saying to the permissive, backsliding Corinthian believers, "*I think also, that I have the Spirit of God*."

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<sup>77</sup> The authority for this, then more than now, resided with the father. Also, it is assumed that the young man in question was a believer (Ver. 39).

## CHAPTER VIII

### *I Corinthians 8:1-13*

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHRISTIAN GRACE: I Cor. 8:1-3: "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

"But if any man love God, the same is known of Him."

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE: In enlightened lands the actual question about eating meat offered in sacrifice to idols hardly applies:<sup>78</sup> but the principle involved certainly does, for it deals with practices perfectly innocent to some believers, which others felt dishonoring to God. In this chapter the apostle shows that the key to the problem thus created is denial of self and love for God and others.

KNOWLEDGE PUFFS UP; LOVE BUILDS UP: *I Cor. 8:1*: Again indulging in mild sarcasm, the apostle declares: "*We know that we all have knowledge.*" Yes, and we all want more and more knowledge, but are often slow to cultivate *character* - in this case *love*.

Knowledge has a tendency to puff one up, and those Corinthian believers who gratified their appetites for food without regard to the convictions of others-and indeed the welfare of others - were not "so smart" after all, for what is puffed up is generally easily punctured. But while "*knowledge puffeth up,*" "*charity,*" or love, *builds up.*<sup>79</sup> It is always constructive, and produces more lasting results. God give us fewer "bubble blowers" and more builders among His people.

Thus the apostle continues in Vers. 2,3 to rebuke self-assurance. He shows the opinionated believer who, puffed up by his knowledge, rides rough-shod over the sincere convictions of his brother, that he "*knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*"

"But if any man *love God,*<sup>80</sup> the same is known of Him."

There is a marked difference between knowing God and being "*known of Him,*" i.e., having His special interest and attention (Cf. [Nah. 1:7](#); [Gal. 4:9](#)). To a man who boasted that he had personally known John D. Rockefeller, a friend is

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<sup>78</sup> Although in recent years the influx of pagans - and paganism - into our beloved America has been frightening. We thank God for any of these idolatrous immigrants who come to know Christ, but it must not be overlooked that we now have pagan temples and pagan, idolatrous worship in many parts of this country.

<sup>79</sup> "Edify" is old English for *build*; it is the root of our word *edifice*. Similarly "charity" is old English for *love*.

<sup>80</sup> Implying that he who truly loves God will surely love his brother.

supposed to have responded: "Yes, but did Rockefeller know *you*?" And it is said of the same "John D." that a poorer relative once wrote him, asking his advice on how to succeed in business. Rockefeller responded by simply taking him through the lounges and sitting rooms of his exclusive club. As their visit to the club came to an end, Rockefeller said: "Now it's up to you. Simply go through those sitting rooms all over again." As "John D.'s" relative did this he was amazed to find that almost everybody wanted to get to know him. A man known to John D. Rockefeller, they assumed, must be one of some significance - whereupon, it is said, the poor relative *became* a successful businessman!

It is well for the Christian worker and for all believers to remember that the mere acquisition of knowledge does not impress God. But God bestows special interest and attention upon those who *love* Him, His children, and the souls His beloved Son bled and died to save.

GOD AND THE GODS: *1 Cor. 8:4-6*: "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many),

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him."

The first thing that the apostle calls to our attention with regard to sacrifices made to idols is that "*an idol is nothing in the world,*" i.e., has no real existence as a god,<sup>81</sup> and that "*there is none other God but one*" (Ver. 4).

What folly for one to worship an idol, sometimes at great expense! When you have sacrificed your fine bullock to his worship, reflect that this "god" of wood, stone, gold or silver, was *made by human hand*. It can be bought, sold, put on a pedestal or in the closet, or even tossed into the air and caught again! And you pray to this *thing* and rely on it for help in time of trouble, even offering costly sacrifices to its worship?!

The Psalmist, in Psa. 115:4-7, compares the idols of the heathen with "the living God," whose love and power he trusts:

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:

"They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:

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<sup>81</sup> Although demons are behind idol worship (1 Cor. 10:20,21).

"They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat."

But all this is so self-evident that to worship idols is not mere folly; it is *sin*, a sin for which the great Belshazzar was sternly rebuked by Daniel the prophet, and then slain by the armies of Darius.

"... thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.... [and] in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans slain" (Dan. 5:23-30).

But hand-made or manufactured idols are not the only "gods of the heathen." *"There be gods many, and lords many,"* says the apostle, both "in heaven" and "in earth," for as Rom. 1:25 puts it: *"[They] worshipped and served the creature [i.e., the creation] more than the Creator."* And in addition they worshipped their great heroes and rulers as gods.

But we know that *"there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him"* (Ver. 6).

The above is a beautiful and precise description of the relationship of the Father and the Son to us and to each other. The Father is the author and object of all things. All things are "of Him" and in that sense, we "in Him."<sup>82</sup> But God never deals with us except *through Christ*. Thus all things are "by Him," and we are what we are "by Him."

THIS LIBERTY OF YOURS: *1 Cor. 8:7-13:* "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

"But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours, become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.

"For if any man see thee, which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

"And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"

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<sup>82</sup> Our position "in Christ" is a different subject altogether.

"But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

After the priest and the altar had both received their shares of the offering made to an idol, the carcass as a whole was sold to the "shambles," the meat shops ([I Cor. 10:25](#)), and/or served at a dining area at the temple itself ([I Cor. 8:10](#)). In both cases, of course, the profits went to the temple and, the healthiest beasts usually being reserved for the idol sacrifices, this meat was naturally the best that could be bought. Thus many believers, fully understanding that "an idol is nothing," purchased this meat for their own consumption.

Still, as Ver. 7 points out, every believer did not have a clear grasp or comprehension of the things we have been discussing under Vers. 1-6. To these, partaking of such meat would be considered an insult to God - the one true, living God.

And you: rather than strengthening your weaker brother, and building him up in the Word, do you weaken him further by causing him to do what he believes to be wrong, until his Christian life and testimony are ruined?

On this Paul comments, first, that men are not either *better* spiritually, for *eating* such food, or *worse* for not *eating* it (Ver. 8). Note carefully: he is addressing the brother who feels at liberty to eat. "You are no *better for eating* this meat," he says, "nor would you be any *worse* if you did not partake." Thus, while the Corinthian believer was at perfect liberty to eat or not to eat meat sacrificed to idols, *by the same token*, there was no compelling reason why he *should* eat it. So the conscientious scruples of sincere believers, who abstained from meat offered to idols, and indeed, did this *because of their love for God*, should not be ignored. Thus, still addressing the brother who does comprehend the true nature of idols and idolatry, rejoicing in his liberty from them, he says: "*Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak*" (Ver. 9).

Does some reader object, quoting Gal. 5:1, where we are instructed to "*stand fast ... in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*"? The answer to this is simple, for it is this very liberty of yours that permits you *not* to eat if you so desire. You have no right to give up your liberty, but you have perfect liberty to give up your rights. Thus the apostle in this same chapter of Galatians, the 13th verse, says:

"For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. "

How wrong, then, for Corinthian believers to ride rough-shod over the convictions of their brethren and say, "I have a right to eat meat offered to idols, and I will do so no matter how my brother feels about it."

Acts 15:28,29 shows that the eating of meat offered to idols was prevalent among believing Gentiles<sup>83</sup> in Antioch and elsewhere as well, for in view of the decision at the Jerusalem Council they were requested to refrain from this *in deference to Jewish believers who might be offended by it.*

Acts 15:28,29, when coupled with Vers. 19-21, further indicates that Jews, more than Gentiles, would be thus offended. They might be less apt to really take in the fact that "an idol is *nothing*," and to regard the offering of meat in idolatrous sacrifices only as an offense to the one true and living God.

Thus Paul again urges Christian consideration and understanding. The "take heed," of Ver. 9, does not spell "i-g-n-o-r-e." "Don't defile your brother's conscience," the apostle says, "by paying more attention to your '*rights*' than to your *responsibilities*."

Vers. 10,11 show how important it is to consider that when the weaker brother is constrained or emboldened by your action to eat meat sacrificed to idols, he really *does sin*, for it is in this very connection that Paul writes in Rom. 14:14 and 23:

". . . to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."

"And he that doubteth is condemned<sup>84</sup> if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

But not only does the weaker brother sin when he follows your example in eating meat offered in sacrifice to idols: *you sin also*, both against your brother and against Christ (Ver. 12). You gave him a guilty conscience and helped to destroy his Christian testimony and experience (Ver. 11).<sup>85</sup>

The apostle closes by revealing his own sentiments concerning his weaker brethren—revealing them to those who were so sure of themselves that they thus became selfish and unthoughtful of others rather than *exercising grace* in humility and love:

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (Ver. 13).

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<sup>83</sup> Probably simply because it was the best meat.

<sup>84</sup> The rendering "*damned*," in KJV is old English for condemned.

<sup>85</sup> The word "perish" in Ver. II, does not indicate that he will be lost again because of what you did to him. The word refers to the destruction of his blessing and joy as a Christian, and so of his testimony for Christ.

The word "offend," twice used in this verse, is an excellent rendering, which should be clearly understood. This word has come to involve feelings hurt for any reason, but the Greek *skandalizo* (from which our "scandalize"), means "to shock, or offend by *improper conduct*," or "to horrify or shock *one's moral sensibilities*." (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary*).

Let us follow the apostle's example, then, and rather than weakening our brother further and destroying his testimony by the gratifying of our flesh, strengthening him and building him up in the faith, to the blessing of you both and to the glory of Christ.

## CHAPTER IX

### *I Corinthians 9:1-27*

PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP: The epistles of Paul contain two extended passages in which he defends his position as an apostle of Jesus Christ. They are Gal. 1:11-2:9 and I Cor. 9. In Galatians he advances the *logical* evidence of his apostleship and in I Corinthians the *practical* evidence.

THE LOGICAL EVIDENCE: In the Galatians passage he flings the certificate of his apostleship on the table, as it were (Gal. 1:11,12), and proceeds to prove by one argument after another that the gospel he was sent to preach was neither "of men," nor "by man" (Ver. 11,12; cf. Ver. 1), but was received directly "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" to him.

He had harbored bitter hatred against Christ and His followers up to the last moment before his conversion, and had persecuted the disciples "beyond measure" (Gal. 1:13; cf. Acts 9:1,2). Further, he had "profited in the Jews' religion" far too handsomely to be tempted to become a representative of the lowly Jesus and His disciples (Ver. 14). And when, by His infinite grace, God did save him and appoint him to preach Christ among the Gentiles, he did not immediately confer with "flesh and blood," or consult with those who had been appointed apostles before him, but went to be alone in the Arabian desert-land and later returned again to Damascus (Vers. 15-17).

It was only after three years that he "went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him for fifteen days" (Ver. 18). And he adds:

"But other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother."<sup>86</sup>

"Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Vers. 19,20).

But Paul's argument becomes stronger when we recognize the fact that James was an apostle only in a secondary sense, for he was not one of the twelve, but "the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19).

The apostle extends the evidence of his divine apostleship - and his *distinctive* apostleship - by declaring that after the fifteen days with Peter he remained "unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea" (Gal. 1:22).

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<sup>86</sup> The "apostles" of Acts 9:27 were Peter and James, the others evidently being away from Jerusalem, evangelizing Judaea. In the Galatians account Paul swears "before God" that he saw *only Peter and James*, of the apostles, and this agrees with Acts 9:26, where we are told that when he tried to join himself to the disciples, "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Ver. 26).

But the strongest argument in his defense of his apostleship is found in Galatians 2. Here he relates how fourteen years later he went up to Jerusalem "by revelation," that is, he was *sent* by the Lord to Jerusalem. And what did he do there? Did he check to see whether he was preaching the same gospel as the other apostles? By no means. Read his argument carefully:

*"And I went up by revelation and COMMUNICATED UNTO THEM that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. . . "* (2:2).

And to prove further that his gospel was not the same as theirs, he adds:

"... [I went] privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain" (Ver. 2).

Why would a private meeting with the leaders have been necessary if his message was the same as theirs?

And to this he adds the powerful argument that with Titus, the Gentile believer, accompanying him as a test case, he "gave place" to the Judaizers "no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue" with the Gentile saints (Ver. 5).

And "James, Cephas and John" (in that order)<sup>87</sup> and all the others who "seemed to be somewhat" and "seemed to be pillars" were unable to add anything to Paul, "BUT CONTRARIWISE," he had indeed "added something" to them, with the result that "they saw" and "they perceived" the validity of his apostleship and in a solemn, *official, public act* ("the right hand of fellowship") they recognized Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles, agreeing thenceforth to confine their own ministry to Israel alone (Vers. 7-9). A moment's reflection should convince us that by this act, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the commission of the "earthly Jesus" to His twelve apostles, was superseded by that greater commission given to Paul (See [II Cor. 5:14-21](#)). Could he have given them - or us - any stronger evidences of his apostleship and message?

THE PRACTICAL EVIDENCE: *I Cor. 9:1,2*: "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?"

"If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: *for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*"

If Paul's logical defense of his apostleship as found in the Galatians epistle, is strong, his *practical* defense, here in *I Cor. 9*, is no less so, for the Corinthian believers were themselves the seal of his apostleship (Ver. 2).

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<sup>87</sup> Because James had usurped Peter's Christ-appointed place as the leader of the twelve (Acts 15:19).

He had *seen* the Lord Jesus Christ, not only initially, at his conversion, but again and again ([Acts 26:16](#)); he had seen Him, not in His humiliation on earth, as the twelve had seen Him, but in His exaltation "far above all" ([Eph. 1:20,21](#)).

The greatest practical evidence of his apostleship, we say, was the very existence of the Corinthian church. In this two-part and notoriously evil city, and under the most intense pressure from his adversaries, God had used him to turn many from pagan idolatry, founding this, doubtless the largest of the Christian churches, so that he here calls them "*the seal of mine apostleship.*" If he was not an apostle to others, he surely was to them, for they were his work in the Lord (Ver. 2).

PAUL AND HIS EXAMINERS: *1 Cor. 9:3-6.* "Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

"Have we not power to eat and to drink?"

"Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas?"

"Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"

"Would you examine me," says the apostle in effect: "Let me rather ask *you* a few questions," then proceeding with the above.

Was Paul *not* an apostle because he did not indulge himself, or make the demands that an apostle might make? Was he *not* an apostle because he lived simply, forbore the comfort and help of a wife to accompany him, and toiled with his own hands to support himself? He certainly had the authority to live in greater comfort than this, and certainly the great Corinthian assembly *should* have insisted at least on supplying his meager needs. The fact that he did not burden them with the demands an apostle might make rather proved the more conclusively that he was "*an apostle of Jesus Christ.*"

While this great man of God had toiled tirelessly among them, *they* had been so thoughtless and inconsiderate as to let him work with his hands to make his living, while they reaped all the blessings. And now *they* question his apostleship!

PAUL'S AUTHORITY vs THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES: *1 Cor. 9:7-14* "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"

"Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also?"

"For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"

"Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal [Lit., material] things?

"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Doubtless the most glaring example of the unreasonableness of the Corinthian believers in examining Paul as to his apostleship, was this fact that they had failed to supply even his daily needs, while he labored among them under the most difficult circumstances to bring them his God-given message. Much less did he receive a salary from them in recognition of his valiant and unremitting ministry among them.

Were they not familiar with Roman law and the Old Testament Scriptures? Who ever goes to war at *his own* charges? Who plants vineyards or raises sheep without freely partaking of the grapes and the milk? And does not God, in the Law, say, "*Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn*"?

"Does God take care for oxen?" he asks. Of course He does. He even cares for the little sparrow, but "*for our sakes*," no doubt, this is written," that the plowman and the thresher may plow and thresh in hope. "Is it a great thing,<sup>88</sup> then," he asks, "if, having sown to you spiritual things [and at such cost!] we should reap your material things?" (Ver. 11). "If I forbear to take advantage of these just dues, am I therefore *not* an apostle? Am I not rather the *more so*."

Ten times in this one epistle the apostle has to ask in reproof, "*Do ye not know?*" and here in Ver. 13 he asks this with regard to the care of the congregation for its pastor.

In Old Testament times the priests and Levites were given no portion of land to cultivate like the other Israelites. They were to live from the offerings brought to the tabernacle (and later to the temple) for sacrifice. "*Even so*," says Paul, "*hath*

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<sup>88</sup> Into day's vernacular: "Is it a big deal? "This is surely putting spiritual and material things in their proper perspective, for what comparison is there between the most lavish material gift and the least of our spiritual blessings?"

*the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (Ver. 14).*

Let us not be too quick to merely praise Paul for his willingness to labor so selflessly, while overlooking the Corinthians' responsibilities so shamefully unfulfilled. Let those who are being blessed by the ministry of faithful pastors and teachers remember that this section of Paul's argument closes with the injunction:

"Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (Ver. 14).

Does this mean that the pastor has a right to "make a gain" of preaching the gospel and go into the ministry as a lucrative enterprise? II Cor. 12:17,18 answers this and stands as a rebuke to those preachers who have become wealthy "making a gain" of the ministry. The sense here is rather that God has ordained that the one who spends his time preaching the gospel should be expected to make his living from the gospel, cared for, materially, by those to whom He ministers the Word. Let those who benefit spiritually from the pastor's teaching, take this to heart, for sadly most believers in this materialistic day are all too "Corinthian" in this respect, failing to show due gratitude for spiritual blessings received.

PAUL AND HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITIES: *I Cor. 9:15-18*: "But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!

"For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

"What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power [Lit., authority] in the gospel."

Paul did not use his authority for personal gain, nor did he write the above in order to induce the Corinthians to treat him more generously, for everywhere he had been deeply conscious of his responsibility *to God*.

"I have nothing to boast of for preaching the gospel," he says, "for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (Ver. 16).

If he did this spontaneously, there was no question about his reward, but even if "against his will," he was *responsible*, for the glorified Lord had committed to him "the *dispensation* of the grace of God."

This in itself made him responsible to preach the gospel, but there was more: he was a *debtor* to the lost. "Why?" you ask. "Could *he* help it that *they* were lost?" No, but he could help it if, due to his lack of concern, they were not saved.

Thus, engaged primarily by God, not his congregation, to preach the gospel, and with a deep concern for the lost and for those who needed his ministry, he considered it a "reward" that he could preach the gospel without charge (Ver. 18).

This was his attitude everywhere, though he might have been burdensome as an apostle of Christ ([1 Thes. 2:6](#)). To the Thessalonians he writes:

"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you,

"Not because we have not power, but *to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us*" (11 Thes. 3:8,9).

Likewise, to the Ephesian elders, he said:

"Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

*"I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:34,35).

Here was a rare man of God, indeed! He felt rewarded if, working at tentmaking to support himself, he could preach the Word without any mention of personal needs.

But this generosity of spirit on Paul's part did not involve material things alone. He sacrificed more than money to win the lost to Christ.

A SERVANT UNTO ALL: *1 Cor. 9:19-23*: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

"To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law.

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some,

"And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

Here, perhaps more than in any other passage, we find that a true apostle was a *servant*, a servant of the highest order: a *steward* of Christ, willing to be "all things to all men" to "gain" them for Him.

Some have interpreted the above passage in a way that makes Paul inconsistent in his testimony. They have taught that Paul had *two* ministries, one to Israel and the other to the Gentiles. So, when among the Jews he subjected himself to the Law of Moses, but when among Gentiles he enjoyed his freedom from the Law.

But stop and think a moment. If in one place, among the Jews, he reverted to Judaism and placed himself back under the Law, and then the next week, as he mingled with the Gentiles, he neglected the sabbath and had pork for dinner: what if this got back to the Jews? Would they not rightly say: "I'll never listen to him again. Last week, with us he was so careful to be subject to the ordinances of the Law, but as soon as he got away among the Gentiles, he paid no attention to the Law, breaking it right and left. He is two-faced. He is a turncoat. It was all a charade."

Surely one who has read the book of Acts and Paul's epistles knows that Paul would not have been so inconsistent, and those who hold the above view should more carefully note the word "as" in Vers. 20-22: "as a Jew . . . as under the law," etc. Paul did not go back under the Law when with the Jews, but he did recognize their convictions and sensibilities, so that when with them he could sympathetically refrain from offending them. Would we not do the same? If I invite an unsaved Jewish friend to the restaurant for lunch, I surely will not order a ham sandwich. It was enough to witness the outrage of a Jewish waitress when I once ordered a ham sandwich in a kosher restaurant in New York City! Even Gentile believers do not necessarily or always eat pork, so if I would win my Jewish friend to Christ, I had better not begin by offending him and doing what *to him* is a grievous sin.

When the question arose about the believer's subjection to the Law, Paul always took his stand boldly for "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1), but this does not mean that he could not sympathize with the *Jews'* determination to submit to the Law. We have already stated that while we have no right to give up our blood-bought liberty, we have perfect liberty to give up our rights.

As to Paul's conduct among the weak: "To the weak became I as weak," he simply teaches us here not to flex our muscles among the weak, but to deal with them gently. This, like Paul, we should do "for the gospel's sake," that we might "by all means save some" (Vers. 22,23).

LEST I SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY: *1 Cor. 9:24-27*: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

"But I keep under my body<sup>89</sup> and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Paul had in his sports-mad day much to say about the competitive games. He uses the gymnasia and stadia, the races, the boxing and wrestling matches, to drive home vital spiritual lessons.

As he witnessed the intense enthusiasm of the masses, and the grim determination of the contestants in the Greek games, he was gripped with the challenge to believers to put as much into the issues of life and death as *these* put into their *games*.

How rigidly the contestants, then as now, controlled and denied themselves! How tirelessly they trained themselves!

"Now they do it," says the apostle, "to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."<sup>90</sup>

Among the various forms of athletics the *race* is specifically dealt with here. In this pleasure-loving, self-indulgent age, believers are prone to forget that the Christian life is a *race*<sup>91</sup> and that the divine Judge is watching their performance. He observes those who are running with all that is in them, and He likewise observes those who have so indulged themselves in the things of this world that they can hardly run at all.

The race will soon – perhaps *very* soon – be over and the prizes awarded. Let each of us, therefore, ask himself: How will I fare then? Am I heeding the exhortation, "*So run that ye may obtain*," or do I scarcely care whether or not I receive the approval of the One who gave His *all – Himself* – to save me from fearful and certain doom and to bless me with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies?

And as to us who have been called into public ministry for Christ let us, like Paul, take care "lest having preached to others," we ourselves should be "castaways"<sup>92</sup> (I Cor. 9:27).

To assure this we must *run to win*, or, to use the other metaphor of Vers. 26, 27, we must be done with shadow-boxing and "beat our bodies under" to "bring them

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<sup>89</sup> Lit., "I beat my body under." He was not beating the air; he was beating his *body* to keep it in subjection.

<sup>90</sup> Their "crown" was a fading wreath, ours is an unfading one!

<sup>91</sup> To some the Christian life is only a *stand* - a stand for the truth. To others it is a *walk*: they seek to live consistent, godly lives, but they have never put enough into it so that it might be said that they are *running*. They have never come to look upon the Christian life as a *race*.

<sup>92</sup> Gr., *adokimos*, "disapproved"; the opposite of *dokimos* of II Tim. 2:15.

into subjection.” God help us to put more into the Christian life than athletes put into their games.

## CHAPTER X

### *I Corinthians 10:1-33*

ISRAEL'S BAPTISM UNTO MOSES: *I Cor. 10:1-5*: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

"And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

"And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."

In Chapter 10 of I Corinthians we have a beautiful application of the truths set forth in Chapters 8 and 9.

Before dealing specifically with the subject of Israel's "baptism unto Moses," however, there is one vital detail in this passage which should be clearly explained.

Some, who believe that Paul did not receive the revelation of the mystery until his imprisonment at Rome, have taught that his pre-prison ministry was largely Jewish, with the establishment of the earthly kingdom in view, and that those to whom he wrote his earlier epistles were predominantly Jewish. They cite Paul's term "*all our fathers*" in Ver. 1 above to confirm this view. But this is a gross error.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about *Israel's* baptism unto Moses he naturally said: "all our fathers were under the cloud," etc., for *he* was a Jew. But when he wrote to the Corinthian believers about *themselves* as a congregation, he said to them:

"Ye know that YE were GENTILES, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led" (I Cor. 12:2).

Surely this proves beyond a doubt that the Corinthian assembly was made up overwhelmingly of Gentiles, not Jews. Similar evidence can be advanced from *all* of Paul's early epistles, confirming the unity of his message (gradually unfolded) from beginning to end.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See the author's booklet, *The Early Ministry of Paul* for an in-depth study of this subject.

All this is not to deny that several years previous the Corinthian Church had had its beginnings in a Jewish synagogue, and that *some* of these Jews had been saved. These, knowing the Old Testament Scriptures, could be of great help to their Gentile brethren. Also, the Gentile believers themselves doubtless were in possession of the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus it is not strange that Paul should here use an illustration from the Old Testament, especially in view of his own declaration that "*these things happened unto them [Israel] for examples, and they are written for our admonition*" (Ver. 11).

THE BAPTISM UNTO MOSES is obviously an important subject, for the apostle states that he would not have the Corinthians ignorant of it (Ver. 1). It is a sad fact, however, that those very truths concerning which Paul says, "*I would not have you to be ignorant,*" that these are the very truths concerning which believers are most apt to be ignorant. Thus, no less than ten times in the Corinthian epistles we find those words of reproof: "*Know ye not?*" Let us make certain, then, that by God's grace we do not remain ignorant of the vital truths set forth in this passage.

Denominational tradition has caused multitudes of people to think of *water* as soon as they hear or read the word baptism in the Bible. [Rom. 6:3,4-water!](#) [Gal. 3:27-water!](#) [Eph. 4:5-water!](#) [Col. 2:12-water!](#) But *none* of these verses refer to *water baptism*. And certainly I Cor. 12,13 does not. But does not one of our standard lexicons define the Greek *baptizo* first of all as *to dip*? Yes, and the person who compiled it was a Baptist! And from the oft-repeated dictum that *baptizo* means "to dip," it is supposed to follow that Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12 refer to *burial in water!*<sup>94</sup> But can it be that the Pharisees *dipped*, or *buried*, their "cups, and pots, brazen vessels-and *tables*" *in water* before dining? If baptism means, basically, "to dip," then they did, for the Greek in Mark 7:4 is *baptizo*, correctly translated "wash" in this case (Cf [Acts 22:16](#)). These examples show how careful we must be to be Bereans.

The word *baptism*, in Scripture, is most closely associated with *identification*. *Water baptism*, thus, refers to a thorough cleansing. Our baptism into Christ (Rom. 6:3) is our *identification* with Him, as our baptism "into His death" is our identification with Him *in His death, etc. He died our death*.

But surely the opening verses of I Cor. 10 have nothing to do with immersion in water, let alone with sprinkling, for the Israelites went through the sea "*on dry ground*" (Ex. 14:16).

"... the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (Ex. 14:29).

It was Pharaoh and his armies who were, not merely immersed, but drowned in the Red Sea ([Ex. 14:27,28](#)). And surely this was not the "baptism unto Moses."

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<sup>94</sup> Where, even, in the Bible, did men even bury their loved ones *in water*??

Actually it was Israel's "baptism unto Moses," their identification with him, that took them safely through the Red Sea. Moses was God's man. As Israel encamped in a trap, as it were, with the Red Sea before them, desert on one side and mountains on the other-and Pharaoh's angry, determined armies behind, Moses said: "*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*" (Ex. 14:13), and a little later, "*Go forward*" (Ver. 15).

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, *and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.*

"And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground. . . ." (Ver. 21,22).

The Bible "Hall of Fame" (Heb. 11), has a brief, but wonderful comment on this event:

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying [attempting] to do, were drowned."

The children of Israel surely *identified themselves with Moses* that night, and under a most severe test, for they could have surrendered to Pharaoh and his armies. But rather, they stood fast and were "all *baptized unto Moses* in the cloud<sup>95</sup> and in the sea." Imagine well upwards of 2,000,000 people following Moses *through the Red Sea*, its walls of water kept from falling only by the power of God!

George Williams, author of *The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, calls Israel's baptism unto Moses, "the greatest baptismal scene of Scripture." Perhaps it *is* the greatest, save one: our Lord's baptism at Calvary ([Luke 12:50](#)).

ISRAEL AND US: The redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt was typical of our redemption from the bondage of sin. Pharaoh, the lamb, especially its blood, and the blessings which the children of Israel had in common were typical too. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the Israelites were not informed that these things were types, much less what they typified. It is only *now* that we understand and see that in the types: personal, historical, ceremonial, dispensational, prophetic, or other, God shows how His heart was full of the secret later to be revealed through Paul, and that this secret was indeed His "*eternal purpose.*" The mystery revealed through Paul was "hid from ages and from generations," until "the dispensation of the grace of God" was ushered in ([Col. 1:26](#); [Eph. 3:1-3](#)). Thus the apostle says in I Cor. 10:11:

"Now these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [Gr., *aiōnon*, "ages"] are come."

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<sup>95</sup> The Shekinah cloud. God's attending angels.

Indeed, he begins immediately to apply Israel's experiences and conduct to those of the Corinthian saints - and to ours.

The children of Israel, so gloriously delivered from Egypt, were "all ... baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea"; they all ate manna from heaven and drank water from the rock,<sup>96</sup> both miraculously provided., "*but with many of them God was not well pleased*" (Vers. 1,5).<sup>97</sup>

And so it was with the Corinthian believers - and so it is with the Bible-believing Church today. We have all been baptized by the Spirit "into one body," and have all been blessed with the same "spiritual blessings"; not one has been excluded (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:3), but with many of us God has not been well pleased. He is pleased with us indeed as He sees us *in Christ*, but many Christians are forever rejoicing in their *position* while disgracefully neglecting their condition, spiritually and even morally. With this "God is not well pleased."

DRIVING THE LESSON HOME: I Cor. 10:6-15: "Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

"Neither be ye idolators, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

"Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand."<sup>98</sup>

"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world ["ages"] are come.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

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<sup>96</sup> These necessities were both miraculously provided for them and "followed" them, as it were. Thus, graciously bestowed by God, physical blessings can be transformed into spiritual blessings ("the same *spiritual* meat ... the same *spiritual* drink"). The rock from which they drank *represented* Christ. (Cf. Matt. 13:38: "the field *is* the world ... the enemy is the devil .. the harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels"): Thus "that Rock *was* Christ."

<sup>97</sup> *Textus Receptus* contains the definite article: "*the* many," i.e., the most, the majority. Out of all Israel's adults who started out toward Canaan, only two remained alive to enter: Joshua and Caleb. (See Num. 26:64,65; cf. Heb. 3:8-11,17-19).

<sup>98</sup> A contradiction has been imagined, since Num. 25:9 mentions the number 24,000. The Numbers passage, however, states the number who "*died in the plague*," while I Cor. 10:8 notes the number who "*fell in one day*."

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

"I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say."

WHO, ME? Perhaps the most prominent sin of the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings, was the sin of *ingratitude*. While some marvelled at God's loving care for them, others - indeed, most others, murmured and complained. Some said of the manna which God provided for them daily, "This is bread from heaven, miraculously provided for us"; others, failing to recall how wonderfully God had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and how He Himself had gone with them (in the Shekinah Cloud) to care for them, complained, "*Our soul loatheth this light bread*" (Num. 21:5). And this lack of gratitude turned their hearts back to "the flesh pots of Egypt"; it caused them to "tempt Christ" and see how far they dared go in voicing their ingratitude (Ver. 10; cf. 6,9). They even got to the place where they reviled Moses, the man God had so mightily used to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. "*Because there were no graves in Egypt,*" they asked at one point, "*hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?*" (Ex. 14:11).

It does not require much depth of insight to see the parallel between Israel's condition in the wilderness and that of the Corinthian believers during Paul's day. Nor does it take much depth of insight to see the parallel between Israel in the wilderness and the Bible-believing Church today. Wondrously saved from the bondage of sin and provided with the great spiritual blessings of the Pauline epistles, the overwhelming majority of God's people turn from these and place greater value upon bodily healing, temporal riches, and the working of miraculous demonstrations such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, casting out demons, etc. The "all spiritual blessings" of "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" are virtually held in contempt while they pine for the physical wonders of a bygone dispensation, all the while confused as to what they really do believe. Meanwhile Paul, the man God used to usher in the present dispensation, with *its "forgiveness of sins according to the riches of [God's] grace,"* and its heavenly calling, prospect and blessings, is all but ignored. What ingratitude to "the God of all grace"!

But when it comes to sins like fornication and idolatry,<sup>99</sup> many Christians are apt to protest: "*Who, me?* I would not commit such sins. I am not that type." But the apostle's response to this is:

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written *for our admonition*. . . .

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<sup>99</sup> Few people realize how vile and sensual most pagan religions are, and how rapidly some of them are infiltrating our beloved America.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (Vers. 11, 12).

And while the next verse does indeed provide comfort for the tempted, *its basic lesson is that human beings, yes believers, are subject to all kinds of temptation.* We dare not say, "If I had been Peter, I would not have denied my Lord," or, "If I had been Jacob, I would not have cheated my brother out of his birthright." Rather than look down with pride on a fallen brother we should ask ourselves: Am I certain, quite certain, that I would not have stumbled over that same stone? We do not know all the circumstances that led to our brother's downfall, and *in his position* we might very well have done *worse*. How slender and fragile, for every one of us, is the line between standing and falling, and if we have stood true in some temptation it has only been by the grace of God. Thus, "*let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,*" for:

"There hath no temptation taken you, but *such as is common to man: . . .*" (Ver. 13).

And *then* the word of encouragement for the one whose heart yearns to please God:

"But God *is faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape,<sup>100</sup> that ye may be able to bear it" (Ver. 13).

FLEE FROM IDOLATRY: *I Cor. 10:14,15:* "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."

Idolatry is a horrible thing, but few Christians understand how subtle is the temptation to this sin, or what it essentially is.

Pagan idolatry did not begin with immoral religious orgies, or the superstition and fear that characterize it today. It began by merely *putting something before God*. In the Ten Commandments God does not warn His people merely against the above *fruits* of idolatry, but against idolatry itself, when He says:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3).

It does not take much reflection to see how *anything* which captivates the heart of the believer, and so displaces God, is *idolatry*. Thus I John 2:15 says: "*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" It does not say, nor mean, that if any man love the world he is not saved, or that the *Father* does not *love him*. It merely declares that the love of the world and the love of the Father cannot occupy

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<sup>100</sup> Obviously we do not *escape* testings we are called upon to "bear." *Ekbasis* in *Textus Receptus* is variously rendered in our English KJV. In the context here it probably has the sense of rising above the temptation.

the heart at the same time. "If any man love the world, *the love of the Father is not in Him.*"

Thus, speaking "as to wise men," the apostle exhorts the Corinthian believers to "flee from idolatry"; to run from it as the deer from the hunters. The believer who truly gives God FIRST place in his life will have little problem with the sins listed in I Corinthian 10:6-10. Thus the apostle writes to the Ephesian believers collectively:

"In [Christ] ye also are builded together for an *habitation* of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22).

And prays for each, individually:

"That Christ may dwell<sup>101</sup> in your hearts by faith. . . ." (Eph. 3:17).

With our hearts thus filled with *Him*, what room will there be for distracting or destroying influences?

THE CHRISTIAN'S SEPARATION TO GOD: *I Cor. 10:16-23*: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

"For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

"Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?"

"What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything?"

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

"Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?"

"All things are lawful [permissible] for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."

Having warned and exhorted the Corinthian believers as to their attitude as Christians, the apostle now turns again to that subject which evidently they found most difficult of all to solve: the question of eating meats which had been offered in

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<sup>101</sup> Gr., *katoikeo*: "make His home" in your hearts.

sacrifice to idols. And thus we receive much-needed light on a subject which is today as seemingly insoluble as it seemed in Paul's day: the problem of Christian liberty vs. Christian love and thoughtfulness, or of the believer's blood-bought rights vs. his liberty to forego certain of those rights for the good of others.

With an appeal to them to give very thoughtful consideration to what he has been saying, he introduces his argument with some searching questions about that sacred memorial which in Ver. 21 he calls "*the Lord's Table*," and in Chapter 11, Ver. 20, "*the Lord's Supper*."

How beautiful is the opening phrase of Ver. 16! "*The cup of blessing which we bless*"! Why do we bless this cup? Why does Paul call it "*the cup of blessing*"? Ah, because it is "*the communion of the blood of Christ*." That cup, or that which it contains, is the emblem of the blood Christ shed for us, and together we bless God for it. Likewise, "*the bread which we break*" is "*the communion of the body of Christ*" as together we remember that His body was bruised and broken for *us*.

True believers rejoice in our position in the heavenlies in Christ, and all our spiritual blessings there. Too many come short, however, in gratefully remembering that all this is ours because our Lord *left* heaven to have His body broken and His life's blood poured out for our sins. This is why God has given us this *physical* memorial.

Let us never forget that for us to be baptized into Christ ([Rom. 6:3](#)) He had to be baptized into the human race, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh - one with us, yea, one of us. Before we could be baptized into deity, He had to be baptized into humanity. Before we could be baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3), He had to be baptized into our death (Luke 12:50). To lift us from earth to heaven and bless us with "all spiritual blessings" there, He had to *leave* heaven, come down to this sin-cursed world and take on Himself a *physical* body to be beaten and scourged and spit upon and nailed to a cross.

God would have us remember this. He would make us more deeply conscious of it and more heartily thankful for it. This is why He has given us one solemn and precious memorial of "the death of the cross." He would remind us again and again in this tangible way that:

"You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled *in the body of His flesh, through death*, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in His sight" (Col. 1:21,22).

Is it any wonder that sincere believers love to join in this united remembrance, the sweet communion of the body and blood of Christ? Is it any wonder that they gratefully and unitedly remember that our Lord once left heaven's glory to come to this wicked world to suffer and die for *their* sins and make them heirs of heaven?

But not only would God remind us of these stupendous facts in this tangible way; He would have us show them forth to others as well in this solemn, grateful celebration, for our Lord said:

"This do ... in remembrance of Me."

And the apostle adds, by revelation:

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. 11:24,26).

At this point we can almost hear some reader object: "If we, the members of the Body of Christ, are to celebrate the Lord's death in this physical way, why not practice water baptism too?"

There are many, many answers to this question,<sup>102</sup> but we take the time here to advance the most conclusive of all. Water baptism and the Lord's Supper do *not* go together in Scripture, as so many suppose, for they teach *opposite* truths. Water baptism, when in order, was *required* "for the remission of sins" ([Mark 1:4](#); [Mark 16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#)), while the Lord's Supper is a remembrance, a *celebration*, of sins forgiven, as we have shown above.

ONE LOAF AND ONE BODY: Some, who believe that the Body of Christ had its historical beginning at Pentecost, have related the Church of today to Lev. 23:17, where, at the feast of Pentecost, two wave loaves were offered before the Lord. These two loaves, they contend, represent believing Jews and Gentiles, now one in Christ. But this cannot be, for several reasons:

1. There were no Gentiles in the Church at Pentecost. The first Gentiles were not brought in until Acts 10.
2. The two loaves of the feast of Pentecost could not have represented Jews and Gentiles, for *if* any Gentiles were present they were not recognized, or addressed by Peter (See [Acts 2:5,14,22,36](#)).
3. Paul, here in I Cor. 10, says nothing about *two* loaves; he says: "We, being many are *one* loaf, and *one* body" (Ver. 17). In the Body of Christ, the Church of the present dispensation, Jews and Gentiles lose their identity as such *in Christ*. "For in Christ," says the apostle, "there is neither Jew nor Greek ... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

What, or whom, then, do the two wave loaves of Pentecost represent? Evidently the northern and southern kingdoms: Israel and Judah, which will be reunited in the coming kingdom of Messiah (See [Ezek. 37:15-28](#), cf. [John 10:16](#)).

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<sup>102</sup> See the author's books, *Baptism and the Bible* and *The Lord's Supper and the Bible*.

Pentecost, then, has nothing to do with the Body of Christ, but with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Indeed the promised kingdom was *offered* to Israel at that time, as Peter declared that Christ had been raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David ([Acts 2:29-31](#)), and said on the next day:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

"AND HE SHALL SEND JESUS CHRIST, WHICH BEFORE WAS PREACHED UNTO YOU:

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" ([Acts 3:19-21](#)).

Thus Paul presents the Lord's supper, not as an ordinance looking forward to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, but as a time of precious communion for the members of the Church *today*, a sacred *reminder* of what our Lord has done for us. But why his emphasis on the *sacredness* of this remembrance? This is explained in the verses that follow:

Those who partook of the meat offered in Old Testament sacrifices were also "partakers of the altar" (Ver. 18), i.e., they participated in the *sacrifice*, thus in *worship to God*. "*What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything?*" (Ver. 19). The implication is, "*Of course not.*" "*But this* is what he is saying: "that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, *they* sacrifice to devils [*demons*, evil spirits], and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (Ver. 20).

So the idol, or the meat offered to it (and then sold at the public market) are nothing. The idol cannot see, hear, smell, feel, talk, any more than can the meat offered to it. But Satan and his fallen angels are behind idol worship. This is something that many Christians fail to realize.

My brother, Harry Stam, spent some 40 years as a missionary in Africa, telling the pagan worshippers of many and varied spirits about the *Great Spirit, God*, and the way of salvation through Christ, His Son. Often did he describe to us the sight of some poor benighted heathen, kneeling at the root of a tree over which he had stumbled, or before some carved image. Now *he*, the heathen, was not stupid enough to think he was praying to the root, or to the carved image *itself*. He was praying to the spirit he felt was in, or behind, that image. And it is Satan and his demons who involve poor heathen in such worship.

So, says the apostle: it is immaterial whether that meat you eat has or has not been offered to idols, but it *is* important not to encourage idol worship or to let weaker Christians think that you have become even slightly involved in it, just because you are eating that piece of meat. True, that meat sacrificed to idols is

"nothing" (i.e., of no consequence), but it does not follow from this that pagan sacrifices are of no consequence, for they are *thoroughly evil*. So we come to Verses 21,22:

"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils.

"Do we provoke the Lord to jealous? Or are we stronger than He?"

We have seen how precious, how solemnly sacred, is the remembrance of the Lord's death at the Lord's table. Shall we then be even careless about involving ourselves with "devils" or demons - to any degree? Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy by showing an interest in the gods of this world? All the above must, of course, be applied to the believer and his attitude to the world and its "god" (II Cor. 4:4).

The jealousy of God is a subject of profound importance, but here let us simply state the Scriptural fact that "*God is a jealous God,*" and well should He be.

The doctrine of the believer's separation is based upon the doctrine of *sanctification*, the doctrine that God has made the believer His own sacred possession. Just think! We are *His* - and He *wants* us for His very own, as the husband and wife belong *to each other alone* - in the most sacred of earthly bonds. It follows from this that it matters to Him who or what has captivated our love, and *He will not tolerate duplicity here*. This is why the apostle concludes in Ver. 23:

"All things are lawful [or permissible] for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."

That piece of "blest" meat is no different, essentially, from the other beside it, but it would not be "expedient," or profitable, if I ate of it before a Christian friend "as a *thing offered to idols*." Nor would this edify him, or build him up spiritually. Rather it might dull the edge of his conscience and make him careless about his testimony as a Christian.

LIVING FOR CHRIST AND OTHERS: *I Cor. 10:24-33*: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

"Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake;

"For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.

"If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

"But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

"Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"

"For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?"

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Psa. 24:1 is quoted twice in the above passage: once as a basis for enjoying *the liberty of grace* (Ver. 26), and once as an argument for *love and self-denial* (Ver. 28b). Here, then, we shall find the apostle enlarging upon his declaration in Ver. 23, that "all things" (in this context) are permitted to him, but all are not profitable, all do not tend toward the building up of other believers.

I Cor. 6:12 is similar to 10:23 above, but while in 6:12 Paul deals with Christian liberty and *his own* welfare, in 10:23 he deals with Christian liberty and his *brother's* welfare: "*All things are lawful unto me.... but I will not be brought under the power of any*" (6:12); "*All things are lawful for me ... but all things edify not*" i.e., do not build up (10:23).

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY vs SELF-DENIAL: *I Cor. 10:24-30*: The text for this brief sermon is:

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [Lit., "welfare"]" (Ver. 24).

This precept should be kept firmly in mind where all our liberties are concerned. But first let us determine God's will as to our liberty in Christ:

Whatever is sold at the butcher's, says the apostle, "that eat, *asking no question for conscience sake*" (Ver. 25), but he hastens to explain that he does not refer to the believer's own conscience, but to the conscience of his weaker brother or of the unsaved:

"Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for *why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*" (Ver. 29, and cf. Vers. 28,32). And "*why am I evil*

*spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Ver. 26), and I represent Him here on earth. Thus the apostle declares in I Tim. 4:4,5:*

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.

"For it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer."

Here we cannot but recall Paul's noble - and Spirit-inspired - word of encouragement:

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

Granted, the specific "yoke" referred to here is the Mosaic Law, but the principle is the same, for *"if the Son ... shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).

BUT, while all this is blessedly true, we do not live alone in this world, needing only to please ourselves. We must also think of the other believers and the unsaved with whom we have contact. Regarding our relationship with them, the apostle says by divine inspiration:

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare" (Ver. 24).

Paul has so much to say about this in his epistles, that it is manifestly important to take it to heart, especially since by nature we are so self-centered and self-important. Thus in Phil. 2:4 he repeats almost the same words:

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Proud man is naturally self-centered and self-indulgent, but God speaks better things for us:

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and *not to please ourselves*.

*"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.*

*"For even Christ pleased not Himself..... (Rom. 15:1-3).*

THE PRACTICAL SOLUTION: *Vers. 27,28: "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you eat, asking no question for conscience sake.*

"But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: *for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.*"

Here we have "the other side of the coin" in the apostle's use of Psa. 24:1. The earth and "the fulness thereof" belong to "*the Lord,*" not to the false gods of the heathen - whom you would be acknowledging if you partook of that which your pagan friend boasted of as meat offered in sacrifice to his false god. Thus God would have His ambassador decline the food in such a case - to awaken the conscience of his pagan host.

Just imagine if Paul, in such a case, should insist on his Christian "rights" and partake of this food. His host could well go out and say, "We had Paul to dinner last night and we all had beef tenderloin offered in sacrifice to Jupiter" or "Paul ate with us, and did he enjoy our lamb dinner! We had lamb dedicated to *our* god, Venus!"

How dishonoring this would be to God, the *living* God, the one and only true God, whom Paul had come to know and to whom he had dedicated his life and service. Regrettably, many Christian believers have thus dishonored God by their homage to lesser gods by which they have been captivated.

THE TOTAL SOLUTION: *Vers. 31-33: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (Ver. 31).

Here indeed is the *total* solution to the question of Christian liberty vs self-denial for the sake of others. How many specific problems would be solved if we, God's beloved children; we, the members of Christ's Body, lived by this precept! To how many such problems it could be applied!

We could apply it, for example, to the question of social drinking of intoxicants, so widely defended today as a means of winning the lost to Christ, especially by many neo-evangelicals. It is granted that there is a difference between an occasional drink and excessive drinking, but this writer was brought up in city missionary work and has often seen how one taste of liquor can ruin a life. Let us never forget that every broken-down slave to alcohol started on his downward path with *just one* drink. If there were nothing wrong with social drinking, why would the Apostle Paul have had to *prescribe "a little wine"* for the "often infirmities" of so great a man of God as Timothy? (I Tim. 5:23).

With the overwhelming evidence of what the use of intoxicating liquor has done to America in general and to individuals on every hand, it is extremely doubtful that anyone could indulge in social drinking to the glory of God or, indeed, without giving offence to some sincere believers in Christ.

*"I have perfect liberty to do this"* is often the defense of insensitive believers for practices that offend others, but the "grace way" is better:

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more" (I Cor. 9:19).

This was Paul's personal testimony as to this matter, and it matches beautifully Ver. 33, here in I Cor. 10:

"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

We have still to comment on Ver. 32:

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentile,<sup>103</sup> nor to the church of God."

We point to the Greek text here, indeed the particular text from which we have our *King James Version*, though here the translators for some reason did not follow it. It is evidently not Israel and the Gentiles referred to in this verse, but the *Jews* and the *Greeks*. The *Jew* stands for *religion*, the *Greek* for *rationalism*, and "*the church of God*" is of course, *the Body of Christ*, the Church of the present dispensation.<sup>104</sup> By heeding the exhortations of I Corinthians 10 we shall cause needless offence to none of these and will bring glory to the One who, at such cost, purchased our justification and glory.

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<sup>103</sup> The *Received Text* has "*Greeks*."

<sup>104</sup> We find the three also in I Cor. 1:22,23: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified ....."

## CHAPTER XI

### *I Corinthians 11:1-34*

HEADSHIP IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE HOME: *I Cor. 11:1-16*: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head.

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

"For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

"Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

"For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

"Doth not even nature itself teach you that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

"But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering.

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

FOLLOWING PAUL: While Verse 1 above is actually the close of the previous section (the end of the paragraph in the Greek) it is at the same time an introduction to the passage which we are now to discuss (11:2-16), for these verses from beginning to end have to do with *authority*.

It should be observed that the apostle does not say: "Follow me as I follow Jesus," but "Follow me as I follow *Christ*." *Jesus* was the God-given *name* by which our Lord was known when He walked this earth with His twelve apostles. But Paul had not even been saved at that time and surely did not follow Jesus. But *Christ* is His *title* as the "*Anointed*" of God. As Peter declared in his Pentecostal address, "*that same Jesus*," whom Israel had crucified, had now been exalted in heaven and made "*both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:36). It was as *Lord and Christ*, exalted "far above all," that Paul knew Him and followed Him as, by direct revelation, the Lord committed to him the glorious "mystery - hid from ages and from generations, but now . . . made manifest to His saints" (Col. 1:26).

Due to the spiritual condition of the Corinthians the apostle could not explore for them the depths of this glorious body of truth, but he did engage in "*the preaching of the cross*" upon which it was founded, and around which its "all spiritual blessings" revolved. What the apostle did preach to the Corinthians, these believers had evidently received with joy and still, with some exceptions, held to Paul as God's apostle to them and kept looking to him for more light. Thus in Ver. 2 he "praises" them for their faithfulness to him and to the truths he had made known to them.<sup>105</sup>

It should be observed at this point that I Cor. 1:12 has to do with *personalities* rather than specific teachings. We know that Apollos watered what Paul had planted (I Cor. 3:6), and that Peter confirmed Paul's message as "the present truth" (11 Pet. 1:12; cf. Acts 15:9,11; Gal. 2:2-9; II Pet. 3:15-18). And surely our Lord had not returned to teach the Corinthians directly. Thus their "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" indicated rather preferences for personality or position, than divisions as to doctrine.

That these Corinthian saints in general still looked to Paul for further teaching is evidenced by the fact that they had written him at least one letter (7:1) of inquiry, to which this present chapter is probably a partial answer.

He follows his word of praise, however, with a "But," for there were questions as to authority on which they still needed instruction.

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<sup>105</sup> The word "ordinances" in Ver. 2 has nothing to do with ceremonies. The Greek *paradoseis* (Lit., *things handed down*), is everywhere else rendered *traditions* (whether true or false), and here refers to those truths and instructions which Paul had "handed down" to them.

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (Ver. 3).

While in general the brethren at Corinth followed Paul as to doctrine, too many of them failed to follow him as to attitude and conduct. And as they ignored Paul's authority, their women ignored *their* authority and this made for disorder in the congregation.

The apostle begins to deal with this problem by discussing a *custom* which prevailed among them at that time. A custom, we say, and a *good* custom, but still no more than that, and certainly in no way any part of the Mosaic Law or any command from Scripture. That it was *only* a custom is amply confirmed by Ver. 16. The significance of this custom we shall see as we go along.

There was in the Church at Corinth, as we say, a lack of respect for God-given authority, especially as it concerned the headship of the man over the woman. They had sort of a "Women's Lib" going there, and this evidenced itself by the repudiation of a custom - again, not a Scriptural law, but a significant custom still observed in some parts of the world today - that of the woman's wearing a covering, or veil, on her head as a testimony to her subjection to her husband. Concerning this Paul says:

"Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered, dishonoreth his head.

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven" (Vers. 4,5).

Since the apostle is discussing order *in the church*, he does not say that the man *should* wear a covering in prayer as an acknowledgement of his subjection to Christ, but that he should *not* wear such a covering since he *represents* Christ, the Head of the Body, in his headship over the woman (See Eph. 5:22-24). Moreover, in Ver. 7 he adds:

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head<sup>106</sup> forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God."

But with the woman it is different. The hair is given to the woman as a *natural* covering, and it is in her nature to make much of her hair. She combs and brushes it. She arranges it to the best possible advantage. She may add a pretty comb or ribbon to make it more attractive, and it is *in this connection* that Paul says, "*the woman is the glory of the man.*" How proud is the man of a modest wife, who keeps herself attractive! And the hair is part of this, as is "*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which, in the sight of God, is of great price*" (I Pet. 3:4). But a brazen, forward woman-who is attracted to her except for personal, temporal

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<sup>106</sup> As men do, for example, in Jewish Synagogues.

reasons? Even her closest women associates are apt to be jealous of her as she climbs past them.

Thus the additional "covering" dealt with in this passage is the woman's voluntary acknowledgement of her husband as her head - and, collectively, of the man as head over the woman, and of Christ as Head over the Church.

If she objects to wearing this covering, says the apostle, then "let her also be shorn" (speaking logically, of course), for her lack of the covering is here no different than if she were shaven (Ver. 5). And conversely, "if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then let her be covered" (Ver. 6). When, in World War II, French women were caught collaborating with German soldiers, they were shorn completely and made to walk through the streets of France in that condition - most degrading humiliation. So much do women think of their hair. As we know, virtually no women are completely bald, as are so many men. This is a lesson from nature, concerning which the apostle continues:

"Judge in yourselves: is it comely [becoming] that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

"Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him?

"But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (Vers. 13-15).

For a time the "hippies" sought to reverse Verse 14, but any of them who are left should consider *God's Word* on the matter. *He* says that it is a shame for the man to wear long hair, and it is indeed sad to see young men, some of whom wish to appear so strong, let their hair grow down to their shoulders until they look like women - wearing the sign of the weaker vessel ([I Pet. 3:7](#)). Often this embarrasses their parents and loved ones, but most of all *it displeases God*, for His Word soundly condemns all forms of effeminate behavior in men, and the effeminate are listed with the most wicked sinners in I Cor. 6:9,10. Let us thank God that if saved, these rebels against God's order can take hope in Ver. 11 of the same passage.

But would not the wearing of an *additional* covering be demeaning to the woman? Does she need to acknowledge her subjection to her husband in this way? Let us look into the facts:

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman is of the man" (Ver. 8).

She was originally taken out of him and made from him -"of his flesh and his bones" (See [Gen. 2:21,22](#)).

And further:

"Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (Ver. 9).

Nothing could be clearer than the divine record of this:

"And the Lord God said; It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him *an help meet* [appropriate] for him" (Gen. 2:18).

"Women's Lib" is not a *natural* thing, for God has constructed the woman so that by nature she *wants* to please and help the man. How many women have married their mates almost solely on the basis that "He *needs* me," or that "I may be able to help him." And how many wives have indeed helped their husbands to be what they ought to be! How many a Christian woman has, in the sweetest, quietest way, helped her husband to curb his temper, to avoid exaggeration, etc., and have thus been used of God to help their husbands to be what they never could have been without them.

Thus the headship of the man over the woman is not the result of any effort on *man's* part to that end. This was clearly God's purpose for man, whom He had created in His own image, and to rebel against it now can only produce the *disorder* we see on every hand.

But are not some wives much more intelligent than their husbands? Of course. And are not some children much more intelligent than their parents? Does this give them justification for disobeying their parents? The question is entirely one of order, for God is a God of order. If any doubt this let them scan the universe about them. But does not all this tend to make the husband feel himself far above his wife with his wife far below, as if he did not even need her? it should not, for the apostle goes on to remind us:

"Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

"For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God" (Vers. 11, 12).

Ah, that small word "by." True the woman is of the man, but every man is brought into the world *by* a woman! Another reason for mutual love and respect between husband and wife.

BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS: *1 Cor. 11:10*: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels."

In seeking for a clear explanation of this verse, the author was refreshed to read the following by Albert Barnes:

"There is scarcely a passage in the Scriptures which has more exercised the ingenuity of commentators than this verse. . . . There can perhaps, be no doubt that the word 'power' has reference to a veil, or to a covering for her head; but why it is called *power* I confess I do not understand; and most of the comments on the word are, in my view, egregious trifling."

And as to the words, "because of the angels," he says:

"I do not know what it means; and I regard it as one of the very few passages in the Bible whose meaning as yet is wholly inexplicable."

Such honesty is refreshing indeed! This writer agrees with Barnes that "no doubt the word 'power' has reference to a veil..... [by *metonymy*, as the *symbol* of subjection to authority]..... but why it is called '*power*', I confess I do not understand. But as to the words "*because of the angels*," perhaps it should be remembered that believers do bear witness to the angels, both good and bad. Indeed, "the manifold wisdom of God [the mystery]" is to be made known to heavenly "principalities and powers ... *BY THE CHURCH*" (Eph. 3:9,10). Is it not, then, appropriate that I Cor. 11:10 should remind us that the angels are looking on to observe either our godly order or the lack of it, or even rebellion against it?

**NO SUCH CUSTOM:** As we study Paul's word to these Corinthians, about a problem that affected them then, in their local situation, a custom and not a command of Scripture - not even of this one - we might tend to hold ourselves and other believers to this exact behavior. But the fact is that the vast majority of believers today, seeing a woman wearing a veil, or covering, at the church service would not have the slightest idea as to its possible significance.

There at Corinth, in that day, if a woman prayed or prophesied with her head uncovered it would, certainly could, indicate rebellion against her husband, but in our day and in our native land, the absence of a covering, or hat, on a woman would have no such significance.

When the author was a boy many women wore hats to church because of this chapter, but few do this today and if they did it would not necessarily signify that they meant to acknowledge their subjection to their husbands. Thus the apostle declares,

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither [do] the churches of God" (Ver. 16).

A closing word on this passage may be appropriate since the Feminists of our day and the Equal Rights Movement have had a significant effect upon many Christian women - especially among those who have had unhappy marriages. To these we can only say that the fact that Paul here discusses only a custom, does not for a moment neutralize the force of the principle he teaches: that of the headship of the man over the woman and her acknowledgment of this fact. But

this we know: When indeed the husband loves his wife "as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," the wife will almost certainly respond: "Who wouldn't *want* to live for a man like that!" (See [Eph. 5:24,25](#)).

THE LOVE FEASTS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER: *I Cor. 11:17-22*: "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

"For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

"When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

"For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

"What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

History has considerable to say about an institution among the early Christians which was called the *Love Feast*. It was a meal of brotherly love celebrated in connection with the Lord's Supper. In fact, the two were often spoken of together as the Lord's Supper. At this meal, originally, the believers ignored all distinctions of wealth, rank and culture, and met as members of one family.

This is doubtless what Paul refers to in the above passage, only by now, at least at Corinth, it had deteriorated from its original purpose. Now greed, instead of generosity had entered in. Every one wanted to be first, it appeared, so that "everyone taketh . . . *his own* supper" before the other, and while some were "drunken," others were "hungry." Thus the apostle exclaims:

"What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church<sup>107</sup> of God, and shame [embarrass] them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not" (Ver. 22).

It should be noted that the divisions among the Corinthian believers stemmed, not from theological differences of opinion, but from selfish conduct. A study of the context will show that Paul's use of the word "heresies" here does *not* have a theological connotation. Perhaps this is the place to consider the word "heresy" (Gr., *hairesis*), as it is used in Scripture.

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<sup>107</sup> The assembly (Gr., *ekklesia*) of course, not the building.

There was not yet open division among the Corinthian believers; this was only *incipient* among some *within* the church (I Cor. 1:10). And the divisions among them, as we have seen, came not from theological differences of opinion, but from moral, inward failure. The Apostle says, with regard to their greed at their love feasts:

"... there *must* be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (Ver. 19).

A "heretic" is simply a *dissenter*. A heretic may rise to dissent from self-will, or he may protest wrong being done or taught. The wrong kind of heresy is that which dissents from the truth of the Word of God; the right kind of heresy, that which dissents from what is wrong. In the case above the apostle says, there *must* be dissensions, protests, against the disorders at your love feasts, "*that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*" (Ver. 19).

It is important too to observe the meaning of the word "divisions" (Ver. 18). The Greek, *schisma* is simply our "schism," an alienation or estrangement. This throws further light on the problem at Corinth. It was not a theological problem; it was that some had "rubbed each other the wrong way." In 12:25 the apostle declares:

"That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another."

And in Eph. 4:16 he explains that the Body builds itself up "*in love*" as "the whole body" is "*fitly framed together*," with no schism or estrangement hindering things from running smoothly. Indeed, in Eph. 2:21 he declares that:

"In [Christ] all the building; *fitly framed together*, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

It is ours, then, to practice experientially what God has made us in Christ, for after more than 60 years of Christian service this writer can scarcely recall one division among believers that was *purely* theological. Virtually all involved personal dislikes and animosities as well.

**NOT THE LORD'S SUPPER:** Some had so linked their so-called love feasts and the Lord's supper together in their minds that they called them together, "the Lord's Supper." But with deep feeling, Paul says, "When ye come together ... *this is not to eat the Lord's Supper!*" (Ver. 20). No indeed! Their "me first" meals were not to be confused with that sacred supper which the apostle describes in I Cor. 10:16,17. By no means! And this all opens the way for his description of that blessed memorial which our exalted Lord Himself, from His glory in heaven, had delivered to Paul to unfold to the saints on earth.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: *I Cor. 11:23-26*: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread:

"And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: This is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

"After the same manner, also, He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

It is of the utmost importance here to note that Paul does not merely relate what had happened on the night when our Lord instituted "the Lord's Supper." By no means is this so. He clearly states that that which he had "delivered" to them he had "*received of the Lord*"<sup>108</sup> now glorified in heaven.

This was a special revelation for these Gentiles in the flesh (*I Cor. 12:2*). It was not a continuation of the Passover feast; it was not "delivered" to a congregation which was mainly Jewish; he "*delivered*" these instructions from the glorified Lord to these saved Gentiles.

Further, this is by no means an ordinance; it is a glad *celebration*. He himself had written with regard to the ordinances of Judaism:

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [i.e., the Law], that was *against* us; which was *contrary to us*, AND TOOK IT OUT OF THE WAY, NAILING IT TO HIS CROSS" (*Col. 2:14*).

Again, he says in *Eph. 2:15*:

"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances....."

Ordinances in Scripture are consistently "things ordained," i.e., for acceptance with God. This is not so with the Lord's Supper. The apostle does not even command his readers to observe it. Rather all is left to grace as he naturally assumes that those so gloriously redeemed will *want to* celebrate the great sacrifice of their Redeemer.

Water baptism, on the other hand, was an ordinance. From John the Baptist through Pentecost it was *required "for the remission of sins"* (See [Mark 1:4](#); [Acts](#)

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<sup>108</sup> Such phraseology is used with regard to the revelation committed to Him by the exalted Lord (cf *I Cor. 15:3*; *I Thes. 4:15*).

2:38; and cf. [Luke 7:29,30](#)). But the Lord's Supper was a grateful celebration of sins already forgiven and a "remembrance" of the Blessed One who bore the curse of sin for us. This is why we hold that water baptism has no place during the present "dispensation of the grace of God," while the Lord's Supper most appropriately does. (See the author's books, *Baptism and the Bible* and *The Lord's Supper and the Bible*.)

Note how all is left to grace in Paul's instructions concerning the Lord's Supper. As we have seen, he does not command us to practice it; he rather assumes that those who truly appreciate the wonder of Christ's death for us will want to join in this celebration. Further, he does not even suggest when or how often this celebration should be held. He simply says, "*as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup. . .*" (Ver. 26). Finally, *nowhere else* does the apostle indicate that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is a command to be obeyed, much less that baptism and the Lord's Supper are "the two ordinances of the Church," In fact they convey two *opposite meanings*: the former (when in order) being "for the remission of sins," and the latter a glad celebration of sins already forgiven - and at infinite cost.

How wonderful, in this connection, is the record of the fact that "When He had *given thanks* He brake [the bread]." How could He *give thanks*, when Judas was even now betraying Him, and the cruel, brutal "breaking" of His body was at hand? How? except that He loved us with a love beyond comprehension and longed to have us forever with Him as His own (See Heb. 12:2; Eph. 1:18; I Thes. 4:16-18).

Before leaving this passage we should explain the words; "*This cup is the new testament in my blood*" (Ver. 25). Does this mean that the Lord's Supper concerns the New Covenant made "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"? (Jer. 31:31). To answer this question let us ask two others. Does the Old Covenant, the Law, concern us Gentiles? Was it not made, also, *with Israel alone*? Yes, but it *concerns* us, nevertheless, for it was given "that every mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19), and Paul wrote this to *Gentiles*.

Then, does not the New Covenant similarly concern Gentile believers? for of a surety, *the New Covenant is a replacement of the Old*. As Sir Robert Anderson so beautifully put it: "What Israel will one day receive by covenant, we now receive *by grace*." It should be noted that the New Covenant, unlike the others, is completely concerned with *spiritual blessings*, thus it is not Peter, but *Paul* who, with his co-workers, was an "*able minister of the New Covenant*" (II Cor. 3:6).

Finally, "the blood of the New Covenant" was the only blood our Lord shed, and it is by that blood that we are saved and blessed. Hence the blood which was shed for us was *in fact* "the blood of the New Covenant," more significant to us now than it ever could have been to Israel. Thus we gratefully "show the Lord's death till He come" to a world that goes its way in revelry and sin.

THE SANCTITY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: *1 Cor. 11:27-34*: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

"And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

It is in the light of the revelation given to Paul about the Lord's Supper, that the apostle now dwells at some length upon the sacredness of this memorial. But here we must be careful not to read into Paul's words more than he actually says.

Many sincere Christians have hesitated to partake of the Lord's Supper, being frightened by the warning in Vers. 27-29. Considering their own personal unworthiness, they have concluded: "If I partake of the Lord's Supper now I will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and will be damned forever." By no means is this so.

This passage says nothing about *eternal* damnation and, besides, *damnation* is simply old English for *condemnation*, the word actually found in Ver. 34. Indeed, this word (Gr. *Krima*) is rendered "judgment" and "condemnation" 21 times and "damnation" only 7 in our *King James Version*. Further, the apostle here does not touch upon our personal unworthiness, but upon partaking of the sacred Supper in an unworthy manner, described for us in Vers. 20-22. So little respect, even, did they have as they combined their so called "love feasts" with the Lord's Supper that the apostle reprimands them with the words, "*this* is not the Lord's Supper."

The meaning of Vers. 27-29, then, is simply that if we participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner we condemn ourselves as guilty of lack of appreciation of that precious body, which was broken for us and that blood, our Lord's own life's blood, shed for our sins. Such an attitude robs this memorial of its sacredness.

Note again, however, how the apostle leaves all to grace, calling upon the Corinthian believers to examine *themselves* as they partake. Years ago two church officers challenged our observance of the Lord's Supper at the *Star of Hope Mission*, a Bible teaching center. "How do you examine your candidates?" they asked. How grateful we were for God's Word on this in I Cor. 11:28:

"But let a man examine *himself*, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

How appropriate it is that, as we partake of this tangible reminder of the infinite love of Christ for us, demonstrated by the "breaking" of His body and the pouring out of His life's blood, we should examine ourselves as to how deeply we have appreciated this and how consistently our conduct has shown our gratitude for it. What solemn vows we should make at such a time, and how earnestly we should pray for grace to fulfill such vows! On such an occasion it would surely be appropriate to join in singing Elizabeth Prentiss' hymn:

#### MORE LOVE TO THEE

More love to Thee, O Christ,  
More love to Thee!  
Hear Thou the prayer I make  
On bended knee.  
This is my earnest plea:  
More love, O Christ, to Thee  
More love to Thee,  
More love to Thee.<sup>109</sup>

**MANY ARE WEAK AND SICKLY:** We do not believe that the weakness, sickness and death referred to in these verses were the results of miraculous judgments dealt out to the recalcitrant believers at Corinth by spiritual leaders. The apostle states all too clearly that they were chastisements *from God*, inflicted on irresponsible believers that they should *not* be condemned with the world (Ver. 32). This reminds us of that oft-repeated truth of Scripture:

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:6, et al).

Thus in the closing verses of this section, the apostle bids the Corinthian saints to *begin* to set matters right, lest they meet together "unto condemnation." "*The rest*," he says, "*will I set in order when I come*" (Ver. 34), indicating that at that time it was his plan to visit them and help them in their Christian walk.

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<sup>109</sup> The author's book, *The Lord's Supper and the Bible*, contains 100 suggestions for *homilies*, brief discourses, for use at the Lord's Table, all of them taken from phrases of scripture related to our Lord's suffering and death.

## CHAPTER XII

### *I Corinthians 12:1-31*

PLEASE THINK THIS THROUGH CAREFULLY

<p><b>Romans</b></p> <p><b>II Corinthians</b></p> <p><b>Galatians</b></p> <p><b>Ephesians</b></p> <p><b>Philippians</b></p> <p><b>Colossians</b></p> <p><b>I Thessalonians</b></p> <p><b>II Thessalonians</b></p> <p><b>I Timothy</b></p> <p><b>II Timothy</b></p> <p><b>Titus</b></p> <p><b>Philemon</b></p> <p><b>Hebrews</b></p>	<p>To the left are <i>all but one</i> of Paul's epistles. In <b>NONE</b> of them does he even mention the gift of tongues. In <b>NONE</b> of them does he discuss the alleged value of tongues. In <b>NONE</b> of them does he urge his readers to seek the gift of tongues. He does not state whether or not any of his readers possess the gift of tongues. Repeat: In <b>NONE</b> of them does he even <i>mention</i> the gift of tongues.</p> <p><i>Question No. 1:</i> If it is so urgent that we today possess the gift of tongues, why does Paul not say so in writing to these believers?</p> <p><i>Question No. 2:</i> The <b>ONLY</b> epistle in which Paul discusses tongues is <i>I Corinthians</i>, in which he writes to <i>those who made so much of tongues</i>. However, in this letter he calls the Corinthian believers, "<i>babes,</i>" "<i>carnal</i>" and "<i>not spiritual</i>".</p> <p>Should not our Pentecostal friends think these things through soberly, not in the light of emotional experience, but in the light of the <b>WORD OF GOD</b>?</p>
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THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS AMONG THE GENTILES: I Cor. 12:1-3: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

"Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led .

"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Some of our readers will have noticed that the word "gifts," in Ver. 1, is in italics in our *King James Version*, indicating that the word was supplied by our translators. Surely the translators were correct here, for the word "spiritual," in Greek as in English, is an *adjective*, so that in English some noun had to be supplied to make the sense. That spiritual *gifts* are intended is evident from the fact that the apostle goes on to say, "*There are diversities of gifts*" (Ver. 4) and continues to write about "gifts" that were "given" to God's people at that time.

The Greek has a way of closing a sentence or clause with an adjective or adverb, leaving the noun or verb implied. Just off hand the writer can think of four more cases like the above.

Eph. 1:3: "*blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly.*" Heavenly *places*, of course, are intended, so the translators have legitimately supplied the word.

Eph. 1:6: "*accepted in the beloved.*" Here the translators did not supply the obvious noun, "the beloved one," (for clearly it refers to a beloved Person - Christ). Some have obviated this problem by simply making the word "beloved" a title, making the clause to read, "*accepted in the Beloved.*"

II Thes. 2:8: "*Then shall that Wicked be revealed.*" Here the KJV translators, used the adjective "wicked" as a *title* for the "man of sin," who is the subject of that whole passage. Rather than the rendering "wicked one," they capitalized the adjective: "that *Wicked*," since the Antichrist, "*that man of sin*," will be the very embodiment of wickedness.

Heb. 2:9: "*that He [Christ] by the grace of God should taste death for every.*" Here, for whatever reason, the word "man" was added though not italicized, but in any case, in the Greek the last word of this sentence is "every," (*panta*), and the word man was supplied as to a legitimate ellipsis. Indeed, here even we would say that Christ died for all, meaning all men. Our Lord did not taste death - certainly not in this sense - for every *thing*, or every *angel*, but for every *man*. This is so evident that the Greek merely closes the sentence with the word "every." Thus there is no reason whatever to criticize the KJV translators for supplying the word "gifts" in I Cor. 12:1, so that English readers may understand.

Finally, it should be carefully noted that the translators supplied the word "gifts" in strict accordance with the context. They did *not* render the phrase "*spiritual things*" or "*spiritual blessings*," for indeed the gifts, or endowments, of the Spirit are not to be compared with the "*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" of Eph. 1:3.

THE BASIC GUIDELINES: Some have thought that Ver. 2 must be a parenthesis, not seeing the coherence between Vers. 1-3 and the chapter as a whole.

Actually we have here the basic guidelines for the recognition of the Spirit's work versus that of Satan. Just because a person works a miracle it does not follow that

he is therefore a man of God. He may be an emissary of Satan, or even one who is deceived by Satan.

As pagans these Corinthians had been "carried away"<sup>110</sup> with idolatry, and had subjected themselves to the authority of pagan miracle-workers. But these pagan leaders did not work these miracles by the power the Holy Spirit of God, for they considered the Son of God accursed. "And no man, *speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed,*" says Paul. Conversely, "no man can say *that Jesus is the Lord,*"<sup>111</sup> *but by the Holy Ghost*" (Ver. 3).

This indicates also that the Corinthian saints, who did acknowledge Jesus as Lord, should do so also in the *use* of their God-given endowments. As we have indicated above, even one who does acknowledge Jesus as Lord may be *deceived* by Satan. We will deal with this subject later.

MIRACULOUS SIGNS AMONG THE GENTILES: It has often been asked why miraculous signs, basically associated with Pentecost and Israel, should now be found among the Gentiles. Our answer is that these signs were bestowed largely though, not only, *for the sake of the Jews*.

Acts 18 relates how the Corinthian church got started in a Jewish synagogue, but Paul's ministry there did not last long, for soon there was a division over Christ, and Paul and the believers had to continue their meetings in the house of a Gentile named Justus. From this point on the church grew by leaps and bounds until now as Paul writes to them they are a large, apparently a *very large*, church, composed mostly of Gentile believers.

But I Corinthians is largely a letter of rebuke for the loose, indifferent lives they lived. What a poor testimony to the Jews, who surely had their eyes on them now!

However, God gave the Jews unimpeachable evidence that the message about Christ, which the Corinthian saints proclaimed, *was true*: these miraculous signs the Jews must accept (See [I Cor. 1:22](#)).

Recall the story of Cornelius, when the first Gentiles were saved. This was difficult for Peter, a Jew, to understand, but his answer to his critics was:

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I that I could withstand God?"

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:17,18).

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<sup>110</sup> By contrast see Eph. 4:14. Mature believers will *not* be "carried about with every wind of doctrine."

<sup>111</sup> Gr., *Kurios*, the one above all.

There is one more important fact we should learn from the opening verses of I Cor. 12:

The "gifts" of miraculous signs to these Corinthian believers were by no means an indication that they were spiritual Christians. In fact there is no letter which contains more of reproof and rebuke in all of Paul's epistles. Thus let us learn at the very start of this section on the miraculous signs that these are not *an indication of superior spirituality*. Indeed, the "carnal"<sup>112</sup> Corinthians had them all, while not a word about miraculous signs is mentioned in the letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians or the Colossians, where he reaches the very pinnacle of spiritual truth. In these epistles he rises from truth for babes (who need things the eye can see and the ear can hear Cor. 13:11) to truth for mature believers, who "walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7).<sup>113</sup>

THE SIGN GIFTS AND THE TRINITY: I Cor. 12:4-6: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

It is interesting to observe that in the apostle's treatment of the subject of the gifts of the Spirit, all the members of the Trinity are progressively involved: Ver. 4, the Holy Spirit; Ver. 5, the Lord Jesus Christ, and Ver. 6, God the Father.

Thus Vers. 7-11 list *the gifts of the Spirit*; Vers. 12-27 deal with *Christ as the Head of the One Body*, i.e., each member has his special gift and should function harmoniously with all the rest. Finally, Vers. 28-31 deal with *the Father's sovereignty in choosing* whom He wills to do what He wills.

AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION: Before dealing with the sign gifts in particular, and the present attempt to recover the miracles of Pentecost, let us make one thing unmistakably clear. We will study these subjects, not in the light of human testimony but only in the light of the Word of God, carefully taking dispensational distinctions into account (See [II Tim. 2:15](#)).

The author has before him two commentaries: one by a contemporary writer - a very gifted Bible teacher, *except* where the subject of *divine healing* is concerned (for that is the theme of his book). The other is by one of the great teachers of the turn of the century. "Great," we say, *except* where the subject of the sign gifts is concerned.

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<sup>112</sup> Paul calls them this: I Cor. 3:1,3,4.

<sup>113</sup> Here, of course, Paul speaks of *himself*.

Both writers make the devastating mistake of accepting the words of men over the Word of God. And as much of the Word of God as they do use is presented entirely without regard to dispensational considerations.

Writer No. 1, traces the gift of divine healing from Apostolic times to the present, mostly from Church history. He relates the experiences of great Christian leaders of the past, "whose testimonies can hardly be questioned"!

But, pray, what can this possibly prove? We repeat that one who bases his faith on the words of men need only compare an American history of the Revolutionary War with an English history of the same to see how *unreliable* the word of man can be - due, not necessarily to *dishonesty*, but to differing viewpoints, prejudices, personal desires, emotions and the like.

Writer No. 2 does much the same with the sign gifts in general. Thus we have here a *Bible teacher* tracing the history of Pentecostal gifts, true or false, through the centuries from Pentecost until now, to prove - what? This same writer would have assailed us with vigor had we used the testimony of man instead of the Word of God to certify the validity of any other subject of Scripture but the Pentecostal sign gifts.<sup>114</sup>

THE GIFTS LISTED: *I Cor. 12:7-11*: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

"For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

"To another faith by the same Spirit: to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit;

"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues;

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."

The apostle here lists nine gifts of the Spirit. Some of these gifts involve supernatural *demonstrations*, others do not, but all are *gifts*, supernaturally bestowed by the Holy Spirit. None are the results of human attainment.

The apostle's opening statement regarding the gifts of the Spirit is of paramount importance. "The manifestation of the Spirit," he says, "is given to every man to *profit withal*" (Ver. 7): not to gain profit *for himself*, of course, but for the profit of all, for the common good.

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<sup>114</sup> Should any object that "the gifts of the Spirit among the Gentiles are different, read carefully Acts 11:17.

Such is the human heart that men will use even spiritual gifts as instruments of personal gain and as a platform for personal prominence. But if selfishness in material things is deplorable, selfishness in spiritual things is *reprehensible*.

As we consider Vers. 7-11 it is important to bear firmly in mind that every item listed is a *gift of the Spirit*, a supernatural endowment.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom. (Ver. 8). This cannot refer merely to sagacity or keenness of insight in general. It is one of the gifts of the Spirit, therefore supernatural wisdom, provided to one or more individuals - and how this was needed in the Corinthian church, where so many wrong and foolish things were being done!

Likewise the "knowledge" here does not refer merely to the acquisition of facts. A person may have a vast store of facts at the "tips of his fingers," so to speak, yet not have the "gift" of knowledge. This was a miraculous, supernatural thing. Peter had the gift of knowledge when, not having been told nor given any inkling of the dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira, he said to Ananias: "*why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?*" and to Sapphira: "*How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?*" with the result that, found out, they both fell dead.

It is not so easy to define the "gift" of "faith," (Ver. 9), but this too was a supernatural gift. We believe that it was an infusion by the Spirit of conviction as to all the great reasons why God is to be trusted. This would give the believer a humble trust in God and His Word which braves all obstacles and often inspires other saints more than any amount of preaching would.

The "gifts of healing" (Ver. 9), considering the background: our Lord's great healing miracles and those of early Acts, were obviously supernatural manifestations.

"The working of miracles" (Ver. 10), was also supernatural in character, but of a different sort (cf. our Lord and the draught of fishes, the storm stilled, the 5,000 fed, walking on the sea, etc.)

As to the gift of prophecy (Ver. 10), this has been much misunderstood. Many have supposed it was the ability to make predictions which then came true. But prophecy is *not* prediction. The Old Testament prophets *exhorted* more than they *predicted*. The word "prophet" (Gr., *prophetes*) simply means "spokesman." The familiar introductory statement to the Old Testament prophecies was, "*Thus saith the Lord.*" Those who had the gift of prophecy in Paul's day could say the same, for they received revelations from the Lord to communicate to the others of the congregation.

"Discerning of spirits" was indeed important at that time and place, with the Scriptures still incomplete and pagan spirit worship surrounding them on every hand. Hence this special gift to discern the true from the false.

"Divers kinds of tongues" refers to the gift of speaking in other languages without having learned them. "The interpretation of tongues" was a gift of the Spirit that gave confirmation through another member that the first did indeed speak in another language. Certain it is that the gibberish often heard at modern "tongues" meetings has nothing to do with the gift of tongues (See [Acts 2:4-11](#); [1 Cor. 13:1](#)). We will deal with this further on.

It is debatable whether the apostle lists these gifts of the Spirit strictly in the order of their importance, yet the gift of tongues is found *last* and in *all three* lists given by Paul (I Cor. 12:8-11, Ver. 28 and Vers. 29,30), very possibly indicating its relative significance. Also, in his main treatment of the subject (14:1-28) he consistently compares tongues *unfavorably* with prophecy, and adds words of caution with respect to speaking in tongues. Again, I Cor. 12-14 is the *only* place in all of Paul's epistles where the gift of tongues is even mentioned, and at the same time *this* is the *only* church he labelled "carnal" and "babes," the very church that made so much of tongues. It appears that the highest word of commendation Paul could find for speaking in tongues was his statement: "*Forbid not* to speak with tongues" (14:39), for tongues, rightly and Scripturally used *were* a "gift of the Spirit." Finally, the apostle clearly states in I Cor. 13:8-11 that the gift of tongues would pass away like a childhood experience. It was a temporary thing.

In the light of all this, what shall we say of some television preachers reaching millions today, who press all believers to "get the Holy Spirit," and "get the gift of tongues - Don't rest until you do"? It would appear that to them speaking in tongues is the hallmark of the baptism with the Spirit.

Something should here be said about the present futile attempt to recover the miraculous signs of Pentecost.

Many people suppose that miraculous demonstrations such as tongues, healing, etc., are clear proof that God is at work. So-and-so must be a man of God or he could not perform such wonderful miracles. How wrong they are! How disastrous have been the results of this unscriptural assumption! The following is a partial list of Scripture excerpts that prove the fallacy of this thinking:

Deut. 13:1-3: "if there arise among you a prophet ...and giveth thee a *sign* or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods *thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet.*"

Matt. 7:22,23: "Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not *prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name*

*done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."*

Matt. 24:24: "For there shall arise *false Christs*, and *false prophets*, and shall show *great signs and wonders*; insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect."

Acts 19:13-16: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, *exorcists*, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, *We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth*. . . *And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded*. "

GOD, SATAN, AND MIRACULOUS DEMONSTRATIONS: One important passage that proves that all miraculous demonstrations are not wrought by God is 11 Thes. 2:7-10:

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [restrainteth] will let, until he be taken out of the way."<sup>115</sup>

"And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming:

"Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders,

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."

The destruction of "that Wicked [one]," the Antichrist, will take place at the close of the great Tribulation. But at its beginning he will appear as a great world leader, with his followers boasting of the "peace and safety" he has brought to the world? (I Thes. 5:3).

Yes, the Antichrist *will* have the power to perform miraculous demonstrations to deceive his followers. (Cf. [Rev. 13:12-15](#)). And since Paul warns his readers in this very passage and in this connection that "*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*," why should we wonder that many of the miraculous demonstrations we see at modern "miracle meetings," *are actual miracles* performed by the power of Satan rather than by God?<sup>116</sup> especially since Satan would use miraculous signs to draw men's minds away from spiritual things to the physical and material, from Christ and the riches of His grace to personal health, wealth and advantage.

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<sup>115</sup> Evidently referring to the Holy Spirit in the Church.

<sup>116</sup> We do not call all "miracle workers" conscious agents of Satan, but is it not a fact that Satan seeks to influence even the most sincere believers? (See I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 2: 11; II Cor. 11:14).

Satan's wonders are called "lying wonders," not because they are not genuine miracles, but because they are used to deceive. And if many sincere, but untaught believers are being deceived by such miracles today, think how the religious but unsaved masses of the tribulation era will go after Antichrist and his miraculous demonstrations, the Holy Spirit no longer restraining the course of evil through the Church!

At this time God will have given the world over to "strong delusion" and "a lie,"

"That they might all be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (11 Thes. 2:12).

This attitude on the part of God is best understood when we consider that at this point the now-1900-year-long "dispensation of the grace of God" will finally have given way to "the great day of His wrath" (Rev. 6:17), and God's anger over love so long spurned will be demonstrated in wrath "*poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation*" (Rev. 14:10).

But those who love a rightly divided Word and the great secret revealed through Paul (and indeed all the saved) will be taken away to be with Christ before the judgment falls (I Thes. 4:16-18; cf. 5:1-10). And certainly those well grounded in the Pauline epistles and especially Ephesians and Colossians, will never sigh for the miracles of Pentecost.

Years ago the author had a discussion with a young woman who insisted that her mother had been healed from terminal cancer. "I saw the X-rays both before and after," she said, "and you can't tell me she's *not* been completely healed, for that cancer's completely *gone*."

I didn't deny it, for I have no question that God can and on occasion does, heal terminal cancers. Neither did I question the sincerity of the pastor who had been the instrument in her alleged healing. But I asked her, "Suppose Satan could somehow enrich your savings by \$1,000,000.00 to draw you away from God and get you interested in the things of this world; do you think he would do it?" She replied, "Yes, I suppose he would." I continued, "Who is it that brings sickness and disease today?" "Oh, Satan," she said, "he even has the power of death..... Well, then," I persisted, "I know he can't give *life*, but if he inflicts sickness and disease, why can't he *withdraw* what he's been inflicting, or stop inflicting it, especially if he feels this will draw both the patient and those who see the change from interest in the things of God to interest in the body and temporal concerns?"

For the first time this woman began to see that Satan is far from the common conception which he himself has promoted. Years later, when she herself was approaching death's door, she wrote me a most encouraging letter, telling me how much she was enjoying passages from Paul's epistles, such as II Cor. 4:16-5:9; 12:7-10, *et al.* What a contrast from those who hold that it is God's will for us to be well - and even prosperous! For them, "healing" after "healing" is finally followed

by *death*, for there always comes that last time, when it just won't work any more. What a long, sad trail of discouragement and shaken faith the healing meetings of modern times have left behind them! And, anyway, is there any precedent for modern "healing *meetings*" in the Bible?

So then, let us learn this important lesson from the Corinthian church, indeed, from God's Holy Word: Just because one person appears to have one or more gifts of the Spirit, it does not follow that that *person* is spiritual. In fact the Corinthian believers, who had *all* of the gifts of the Spirit (1:7) were, as a group, *not* spiritual, but *carnal* (3:1-3). Surely this fact should apply with even greater force to those today, whose "gifts of the Spirit" are at least called in question.

Nor is the present widespread interest in sign-gifts any indication of a spiritual awakening, for our Lord twice *complained* of the Pharisees and their demand for signs:

"And He sighed deeply in His spirit and saith, Why cloth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

"And He left them, and . . . departed to the other side" (Mark 8:12,13, and cf. Matt. 12:39, where He says, "An *evil and adulterous*<sup>117</sup> *generation seeketh after a sign*").

Likewise, He said to the nobleman of Capernaum,

"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48).

Had that generation believed His words, they would not have needed miraculous signs to prove to them that He was Messiah indeed.

ONE BODY WITH MANY MEMBERS: *I Cor. 12:12-26*: "For as the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

"For the body is not one member, but many.

"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

"And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

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<sup>117</sup> Spiritually, in their unfaithfulness to God.

"If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.

"And if they were all one member, where were the body

"But now are they many members, yet but one body.

"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

"Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.

"And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

"For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked.

"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it."

THE CHURCH A LIVING BODY: The true Church is not an organization, nor does one join it through the noisy mechanics of denominational machinery. Rather it is a *living organism, a body, and believers are joined to it by the quiet working of the Holy Spirit.*

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (Ver. 13).

Oh, that all of God's people could see the blessed doctrine of the "one Body" with its "one baptism"! What a difference the understanding of this truth can make in the life of a believer!

Mark well, Ver. 12 says of this "one body" with its "many members": "*So also is Christ.*" He is "one body" with "many members." We become one with each other as we become one with Him.

The "*one Spirit*," "*one baptism*," and "*one Body*," are also brought together in Paul's passage on the seven unities of the Spirit, in Eph. 4:3-6, yet some seek to evade the simple, precious truth of I Cor. 12:13 by contending that the word "by," with which the verse opens, should be "in." How this would make sense we utterly fail to see, but it surely destroys the clear, simple sense of the passage as it is. Of course, we agree that the word rendered "by" is the Greek *en*, but it is used here in the *instrumental case* as it often is in the Greek.

But the Spirit is more than only the *agent* of our baptism into the Body of Christ; He is also the living Fountain at which we all drink and are refreshed (cf. [John 4:14; 7:37-39](#)). Thus believers are "all made *to drink into [or from] one Spirit*" (I Cor. 12; 13).

THE BODY AND THE INFERIORITY COMPLEX: *I Cor. 12:14-19*: There are always some in the Body who wish they were, or think they ought to be, something more significant, and this makes for dissatisfaction and unhappiness. These Paul deals with in Vers. 14-19.

First, the Body is not one member, but many: we simply cannot all hold the same position. But in any case such still *belong to the Body of Christ*, in their lowly positions they are still *the members of Christ! is this a lowly position?*

Should the "foot" complain that he is only a foot and not one of those versatile hands, the apostle replies: "*Is it therefore not of the Body?*" Or if the "ear" shall say, "What am I compared to the eye? The eye is the light of the whole Body, but what am I?" the apostle again responds: "*Is it therefore not of the Body?*"

"*If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?*" he asks, or "*if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?*" (Ver. 17).

None of us appreciate deeply enough the amazing fact that *we*, with all our failures, are members of the Body of Christ, each one with a particular function to perform. Thus our passion should be to perform that function well and in harmony with the rest, rather than wishing we were some other member. Moreover it is *God* who has set every member in his place in the Body "*as it hath pleased Him*" (Ver. 18). Shall we question *His* impartiality, or judgment, or love?

THE BODY AND THE SUPERIORITY COMPLEX: *I Cor. 12:20-25*: Notice carefully: here the apostle turns from those who are disappointed with their positions in the Body to those who boast of theirs. In Ver. 14 he demonstrates that the body is not one member, but many, and that all should take their God-given places thankfully, serving the Body, each in his particular way. But here (Ver. 20) he reminds the boaster that there is but one Body, and each person but *one* of its many members. Similarly, the man with the inferiority complex questions whether he even belongs to the Body, while the man with the superiority complex acts as if he thinks he is the *whole* Body! (Vers. 15,16, cf. Ver. 21). The former, *seemingly*,

less exalted, looks at the latter and says, "*I am not of the Body,*" while the latter, *seemingly more* exalted, looks at the former and says, "*I have no need of you.*"<sup>118</sup>

The apostle now proceeds to point out to his readers that we most *need* some members of the body which "*seem* to be more feeble," and bestow "more abundant honor" on those members thought to be less honorable. The *arm*, powerful, useful, visible: but what particular honor do we bestow upon it? But the stomach! Not beautiful and (fortunately) not visible, but what great care a wise mother and wife go to serve it well! She bestows upon it, indeed, "more abundant honor."

Why did God give all the members of the Body their own specific functions, each one so different from all the others? Ah, that it may function smoothly, without any friction or division and "*that the members should have the same care one for another*" (Ver. 25).

When my right hand is bruised or crushed, how spontaneously the left leaps to its aid! It asks no questions, has no doubts; it just helps-immediately, and so do the eyes, the fingers and, perhaps, a dozen other members of my body. Indeed, when one finger is crushed and suffers, *the whole body* feels the pain, testifying that the body is *one* unit with many parts. Likewise, when one member is honored (a cataract removed from the eye, a splinter from the hand, or some disease cured) the whole body rejoices with it. (Ver. 26).

So it should be with the members of the Body of Christ, each having the same care for the others. How much blessing and joy a deep appreciation of the *truth* of the Body of Christ could bring to many an unhappy congregation of believers!

THE BODY AND THE GIFTS: *I Cor. 12:27-37*: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

"And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of hearings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

"Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

"But covet earnestly the best gifts....."

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<sup>118</sup> The theory that the "Body" of Eph. 3:6 is a different "Body" than that referred to in this chapter is based largely on the fact that in the "body," here in I Cor. 12:21, both the "head" and the "feet" are represented as *members*. The ear, the eye, and the nose are also included. But this error arises from a failure to see that Paul uses the body here as in *illustration*, depicting both the most exalted and the most abased as *needing each other*. In fact, however, it *is* true that our Lord *needed* the whole Body as the whole Body needs Him: He, to forgive and love and save; *we to be* forgiven and loved and saved. The "Two Body Theory," as it came to be called, was, thank God, thoroughly dealt with when it arose, and found to be utterly untenable.

Note: not only are we "one body *in* Christ"; we are also "the Body *of* Christ." In one sense He and we form one Body (Ver. 12), but in another He is the Head and we the Body. This too is symbolic. My two hands work together, but their real unity is in the head. It is from the head that messages are sent to the various members of the body with instructions as to how to act.

Thus we, members of His Body, should let Him, our Head, do the thinking, the planning, the giving of instructions. All of us cannot be given the same gifts, but all will work happily in harmony with the rest if we allow the Head to do the thinking. This is why Paul speaks so often of "*the mind of Christ.*"

It should be observed that the first part, at least, of the list of Ver. 28 is given strictly in order: "*first* apostles, *secondarily* prophets, *thirdly* teachers, *after that* miracles, *then* gifts," etc. This should be clearly borne in mind in interpreting Eph. 4:11 as well as in determining the *value* of tongues in this passage, for there are also differences in the *value* of "the gifts of the Spirit." Thus the apostle urges these saints to "*covet earnestly the best gifts*" (Ver. 31).

"*And yet*": Even the best, the very best, of these Pentecostal gifts, were not to continue for long. They all belonged to a passing dispensation, the successor offering *the best of all!* Thus: "covet earnestly the best gifts:"

"And yet show I unto you A MORE EXCELLENT WAY" (Ver. 31).

## CHAPTER XIII

### *I Corinthians 13:1-13*

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY: *I Cor. 13:1-7*: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,<sup>119</sup> I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

It is evident from *I Cor. 12:11* and *31* that the intervening passage about the body and its members, was written as a corrective for the abuse of the sign gifts by the Corinthian believers. This is no less so of the chapter before us, lying as it does, between Chapter 12 and Paul's principal teachings on the sign gifts in Chapter 14.

True Christian love is grossly misunderstood in this day of widespread spiritual declension. The charismatic teachers make much of love; so do the neo-evangelicals. But while they doubtless over-emphasize their brands of love, we have yet to hear one of them call love "*the more excellent way*," an indication that they do not understand the relation between *I Cor. 13* and the sign gifts.

The bestowal of the sign gifts at Corinth was certainly related to Pentecost, for, of the first Gentiles to receive the gift of tongues, Peter said:

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, *as on us at the beginning.*"

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<sup>119</sup> *I Corinthians 13* has been so long and so widely known as '*the love chapter*,' that it is obvious that the vast majority of Bible readers understand that the "charity" of KJV simply means love. Charity as an old English word which is now more commonly used for *benevolence* or *philanthropy*. Happily our translators seldom used it, for the Greek *agape* is rendered "love" 280 times in the New Testament, and "charity" only 27 times.

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the *like gift as He did unto us*, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15,17).

Indeed, many charismatics urge their hearers to "*go back to Pentecost.*" Others freely call these manifestations "*the Pentecostal gifts.*"

In I Cor. 13 Paul deals first with the Corinthians' self-centered and unloving use of the gift of tongues, as he thunders: "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels*<sup>120</sup>", the languages of earth and heaven too, "*and have not love, I AM BECOME AS SOUNDING BRASS OR A TINKLING [CLANGING]*<sup>121</sup> CYMBAL" (Ver. 1).

Some of our readers know what a clanging pair of cymbals sounds like, especially close at hand! But could a person with a gift of the Spirit, then, make nothing but noise before God? Yes indeed! He might even speak in an angelic tongue and be nothing but noise before God! Thus, again, the gift of tongues was not, in itself, any indication of true spirituality.

Even the prophet (Ver. 2), a spokesman for God while the Scriptures were still incomplete, was "NOTHING" before God if his ministry was not motivated by love.

Proceeding with the gifts of *wisdom, knowledge and faith* (Ver. 2), mentioned in 12:8,9, he declares that even the understanding of all mysteries, and all knowledge, and faith strong enough to remove mountains would add up to "NOTHING," without love. The people might say, "What a mind!" or "What a brain!" or "What faith!" but God will say, "I see nothing good in it; it all adds up to *nothing.*"

But would a person bestow all his goods to feed the poor, or give his body to be burned, *if he did not have love?* Yes, for there it is in the Word of God (Ver. 3). Many great philanthropists have given of their millions out of pure selfishness, hoping to gain favor with God thereby. The Ten Commandments say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and they have been proud that they have done so much good for others! This is their religion, and they are sure that God will deal well with them because they have done so much for others. And, remember, in the dispensation in which our Lord lived on earth, it was *expected* of His followers that they "sell all and give alms" (Luke 12:33). Thus to do so *now*, one would think, should bring the greater rewards. But not so, says the apostle, unless it is done out of love. Yea, even though "I give my body to be burned, and have not love, *it profiteth me nothing*" (Ver. 3).

But here is an interesting fact: The Corinthian believers *did* speak with tongues, prophesy, work miracles and heal the sick, but how many of them gave all their goods to feed the poor? The fact is that in Paul's two letters to them, he rebukes them more often for their selfishness and lack of generosity than for any other sin!

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<sup>120</sup> See Gal. 1:8.

<sup>121</sup> Gr., *Alalazo*, loud noise: from "battle cry."

And is it not just so in our day? Many cry, "Let's go back to Pentecost," but there is one detail of the Pentecostal program that they assiduously avoid:

Our Lord, while on earth with His disciples, said:

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

"*Sell that ye have, and give alms...*" (Luke 12:32,33).

And when Pentecost arrived, the disciples gladly obeyed this part of the program:

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

"And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44,45).

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common....

"Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold" (Acts 4:32-34).

Virtually none of our Pentecostal friends obey this Pentecostal rule, nor indeed do any who claim to be working under the so-called "Great Commission." Rather they seem to think of this commission and the Pentecostal program as sort of a box of gifts from which *they* may choose what they wish and leave the rest.

THE QUALITY OF LOVE: *I Cor. 13:4-7*: It is touching just to read Verses 4-7 of this chapter. Many popular pastors and teachers today, under the pretense of "love" are preaching tolerance and permissiveness. They want their organizations to grow; they don't want the "boat rocked." Let some one speak out against evil practices or false doctrine and he will soon find himself *persona non grata*. Paul described true Christian love, not as permissiveness, but as we have it here in Vers. 4-7.

From what some have taught one would hardly think that our sovereign God could be a *tender-hearted* God, but this passage assures us that He is just that. Indeed, when we consider that "God *is* love" ([I John 4:16](#)), we ought the more to seek to emulate Him in this.

A PASSING ADMINISTRATION: *I Cor. 13:8-13*: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

"But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

The above passage from the heart and pen of Paul is popularly interpreted to mean that whereas prophecies, tongues and knowledge are passing things, faith, hope and love will abide even after this life is over. Thus the things of our present childhood will one day be put away, to be replaced by the things of our *future manhood in heaven*. Probably nine or so out of ten commentaries present this view.

But the popular interpretation is not the correct interpretation, for here the apostle, by the Spirit, deals with three subjects: (1.) That which was to be done away, (2.) that which was to take its place, and (3.) that which was to abide throughout.

It should be clearly understood that the things which were to be done away<sup>122</sup> and would "cease" were the sign gifts. The passage does not teach that prophecies would fail to come true, but that the *gift* of prophecy (I Cor. 12:4-11 and 28-31), possessed by some at that time, would be done away. Nor does it teach that people would stop talking or knowing things, but that the *gifts of tongues* and supernatural knowledge would "cease" and be "done away."

Further, these gifts were *shortly* to be done away; done away, very possibly during their lifetime. They were part of the transition from an earthly program and "the gospel of the kingdom," to a heavenly, spiritual program and "the gospel of the grace of God." Indeed they had already begun to learn the glorious truths of the new dispensation. Thus these gifts belonged to a *childhood* which was consistent with that transition. The great truths of grace and the mystery were only gradually revealed to Paul himself (See Acts 26:16; II Cor. 12:1). Hence he says: "*We know in part .... we prophesy in part ... we see through a glass*<sup>123</sup> *darkly.*" But the

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<sup>122</sup> The word rendered "fail" and "vanish away" in Ver. 8, is *katargeo*, to do away.

<sup>123</sup> Lit., "*a mirror.*" The mirrors of those days were but polished metal surfaces, and did not give the bright, clear reflections that our mirrors do. In fact the word "darkly" comes from the root *enigma*, and doubtless this is the kind of reflection most of their mirrors gave! To carry the metaphor further, he says: "*but then face to face*" and "*then shall I know even as also I am known*" (Ver. 12), like two friends meeting face to face. They immediately recognize each other. It is from Vers. 9, 10 and 12 that some have concluded that Paul here refers to this life and the life to come. But this cannot be, for the passage clearly deals with *growth* from childhood to maturity (Ver. 11). Rather he refers to the clearer perception to accompany the full revelation of

revelation was soon to be complete (Col. 1:25), and with, its completion "childish things" and "that which is in part," were to be done away.

From Paul's own letters it is evident that he was not willing to have believers wait for heaven to pass from childhood to manhood. Indeed, he chides these very Corinthians for failing to grow spiritually, calling them "carnal" and "babes" (I Cor. 3:1-4). And in Eph. 4:14 he exhorts *"that we henceforth be no more [longer] children."* There are many passages in his epistles along this line.

But as Satan used the Word of God itself to tempt our Lord, and to cause the Galatians to "fall from grace" into the bondage of Moses' Law, so he uses it in our day, pointing to the Scriptures, wrongly divided, to draw sincere believers away from a full appreciation of their "all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies" to the lesser blessings of a former dispensation. Our adversary is well pleased when untaught Christians say: "If it's in the Bible it's good enough for me." but there are two Scriptures in this connection that he will never point men to. They are Rom. 11:13 and 11 Tim. 2:15, for were these heeded the theological confusion and division in the Church would be dispelled.

Paul called the Corinthians, with all their "gifts of the Spirit," *babes*, unable to digest solid food (I Cor. 3:1,2), and their "envying and strife and division" (3:3) were proof indeed that they were spiritually immature.

In the light of this let no modern Pentecostalist imagine that his supposed "gifts" of healing, prophecy or tongues are signs of spiritual maturity. Supernatural gifts in themselves, were *never* an indication of spirituality. Balaam was an enemy of Israel, yet God gave him the gift of prophecy (Num. 24:15-25). Indeed, we read that "the Lord opened the mouth" of Balaam's ass so that he might rebuke his master (Num. 22:28). Is it strange, then, to read that Paul reminded the Corinthian saints that the Spirit gives His gifts, as He wills, to whom He wills and for whatever reason He wills?

A few visits to Pentecostal meetings should convince any thoughtful student of the Word that maturity is not one of their characteristics. Do their "interpreters" of tongues offer us some refreshing light on the Word? Not those who interpreted at the meetings the author has attended. Of three that we can recall one said, "The Lord is pleased with the meeting," another, "The Lord is coming soon, and we must be ready," and the third, "Something's wrong, we should all get down and pray." And what brings the greatest response from the audience? The speaker who goes to the greatest extremes of physical and vocal exertion, the suggestion that the Holy Spirit is about to come down in power, or the mere account of some sensational "healing." But *"the riches of the glory of the mystery,"* which God

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the mystery. When this revelation is complete, he avers, even he will see "face to face" and "know," or recognize (one of the chief uses of the Greek *ginosko*) even as he and a friend would recognize each other. Thus when the Corinthian believers reached greater maturity, they were to "put away" the "childish things," the "toys" that now held their excited interest.

"would make known" to His saints (Col. 1:27) and by which they may be established in the faith (Rom. 16:25) is utterly unknown to them.

The Corinthians had an exaggerated estimate of the value of the sign gifts at a time when they were at least in order. But what shall be said of those who make much of them after God has suspended them and made them to cease? The surging waves of emotionalism, the constant emphasis on the miraculous, the self-deceit and the deception of others, the failure to recognize Paul as the God-appointed apostle of the present dispensation - all this is not of God, but of Satan, who is "transformed into an angel of light" and sends forth "ministers of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:14,15) to confuse and deceive the people of God.

THE ABIDING TRINITY: I Cor. 13:13: "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

This is the next logical step in the apostle's argument that while some things will pass away to be replaced by others, there are certain basic factors which will "abide," or *remain*. These are *faith, hope and love*, and with the passing of the sign gifts these three give *full and sufficient evidence* of normal, healthy Christianity. Let those of *that* day possess them and they will grow in grace, passing from infancy to maturity; from "that which is in part" to "that which is perfect [fully developed]." Let the believer *today* possess them in good measure and they will keep him from spiritual decline.

Faith, hope and love are a *trinity*. While the apostle may speak of any one or two, or of all three together, yet they are so wholly one that no one can exist apart from the other two. Furthermore, each is equally important in its way. *Love* is "the greatest," the crowning virtue. It is of *paramount* importance. Yet obviously *faith* is of *primary* importance. Faith must come *first*, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]." And *hope*, or expectancy, is of *perpetual* importance. It lies at the center of our daily Christian experience.

It was these three graces that the apostle looked for in each one of the churches, judging the genuineness of its profession by the measure of their presence or absence. He never asked, "How many baptized converts do you have?" or "How many of you have the sign gifts?" The program was no longer: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved... and these signs shall follow*" (Mark 16:16,17). He always emphasized *faith, hope and love*.

Take Rom. 5:1-5: He had never been to Rome, but he declares to them that "*Being justified by FAITH we have peace with God*" so that we may "*rejoice in HOPE of the glory of God*" - a hope that "*maketh not ashamed; because the LOVE of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.*"

Take Gal. 5:5,6: "*For we, through the Spirit, wait for the HOPE of righteousness by FAITH . . . which worketh by LOVE.*"

In the Thessalonian epistles this blessed trinity of faith, hope and love is interwoven throughout. In opening his first letter to them he speaks of. "Remembering *without ceasing your work of FAITH, and labor of LOVE, and patience of HOPE in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father*" (I Thes. 1:3). And he could open his second letter to these precious, persecuted saints by saying:

". . . your FAITH groweth exceedingly,

"And the LOVE of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

"So that we ... glory in ... your PATIENCE OF FAITH [HOPE] in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (II Thes. 1:3,4).

And so through all of Paul's epistles to the churches, and especially in those to the Thessalonian believers, *faith, hope and love* was the abiding trinity of graces he taught.<sup>124</sup> And *today* these are the graces *God* seeks in us. Any assembly of believers with a goodly amount of faith, hope and love, is a *full* church, whether 20 or 2,000 in number.

FINAL CONSIDERATION: It has been thought by some that the present, apparent restoration of the sign gifts may be evidence that the dispensation of grace is soon to end, to give place to the tribulation period, when miraculous signs will again be in order.

But I Cor. 13:8 does not say that the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge would disappear *for a time*, until the dispensation of grace should draw to a close. It simply states that they would be done away - i.e., in the dispensation of grace. However we *do* read concerning Antichrist, that his coming will be "*after the working of satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders*" (II Thes. 2:9), and in connection with the close of the present dispensation (in the same passage): "*... the mystery of iniquity DOTN ALREADY WORK, only He who now letteth [restrains] will let, until He be taken out of the way*" (II Thes. 2:7).

If, then, Paul said that the sign gifts would cease, but that the Lawless one, the Antichrist, would come during the tribulation with "*the working of satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders,*" - and that "*the mystery of iniquity [Lit., lawlessness] doth already work,*" is the present rash of alleged miracles of God or of Satan?

We must bear in mind that Satan constantly seeks to use the saints to dishonor God. Let a saint fall into some form of immorality, and Satan will use it. Let him simply lose his temper and Satan will use it-and the *principal* realm in which he works is not the psychic, or "soulual," but the *spiritual* (II Cor. 11:13-15; Eph. 6:12).

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<sup>124</sup> The author deals with this subject in greater depth in his booklet on *The Abiding Trinity*.

He blinds the minds of the lost ([II Cor. 4:4](#)), and seeks to confuse and divide the saints with false doctrine.

How strong in the faith and in the knowledge of the Word, we should all seek to be, lest all unwittingly we find ourselves, God's dear children, saying or doing anything that might dishonor His blessed name.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *I Corinthians 14:1-40*

(We believe that a subject-by-subject exposition of this chapter will serve our readers better than a verse-by-verse exposition.)

A SUGGESTION FOR THE READER: re *I Cor. 14:1-28*: We have reached the great Bible passage on *tongues*. We suggest you read it through *carefully* to determine whether the tongues spoken in the Corinthian church were *known* or *unknown* languages.

Don't consult the "experts" - at least not yet. Read carefully, and ponder thoughtfully and prayerfully to determine for yourself whether the *King James* translators were right or wrong when they supplied the word "unknown" in referring to these tongues.

This is a question of profound significance at a time when the tongues movement has spread far and wide, when almost every Protestant denomination and even the *Roman Catholic Church*, have its factions speaking in "tongues." And it is doubly important at a time when radio and television preachers are reaching millions daily, urging them to seek "the gift of tongues," which they consider the hallmark of "the baptism with the Holy Spirit."

Thus we plead: give this passage of Scripture, and this chapter of our commentary, the time and meditation they deserve.

TONGUES: KNOWN AND UNKNOWN: *I Cor. 14:1-28*: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

"I would that ye all spoke with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

"And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?"

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

"So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air.

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

"Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

"Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?"

"For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

"Brethren be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

"If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

"But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all.

"And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak to himself, and to God."

A QUESTION OF TRANSLATION: is it not interesting that nowhere in Paul's epistles except in this one to the Corinthians, do we read about the gift of tongues? And is it not strange that here, suddenly, we find the phrase '*unknown tongue*' *six times*? Some, including more recent translators, dispose of the matter by saying simply, "The word '*unknown*,' is not found in the Greek texts and should be omitted."

We are not of the number of these who so lightly dispose of this matter. We cannot but reflect that the *King James* translators, well over 40 of them, doubtless gave more time, individually and collectively, to the study of New Testament Greek than any translators since. Most of them gave their *lives* to the study of this subject and have justly been called scholars of New Testament Greek. How blest the Church has been that God provided these studious, accurate and devoted men of God to translate the New Testament into English for us!

The majority, if not all 47 of these translators felt that they were supplying the word "unknown" here to complete a legitimate ellipsis. True, even the best of translators are human and may err - but the same glaring error *6 times* in this one passage, with the majority of the 47 members concurring? Hardly! These men must have been strongly convinced that the Corinthian believers spoke in *unknown* tongues, and that this *passage says so*. Why? On what grounds? Let us consider some of the facts that must have proved conclusive to them.

CORINTH IN PAUL'S DAY: **Corinth**, with its *two* harbors, one facing Asia Minor and Palestine, and the other Italy and Spain, was one of the greatest commercial centers of the world. Here great seagoing vessels from Asia Minor and the Middle East unloaded their cargoes, to be hauled across the narrow isthmus and transferred to other vessels going to Italy and Spain. Meantime cargoes from Italy and Spain would be coming from the opposite direction, carrying goods for Asia Minor and the Middle East. Thus merchants and traders from many places came here to take advantage of its business opportunities.

Corinth also had its attractions for those who might wish to visit the area. Among its opportunities for entertainment were the world-renowned *Isthmian Games* that drew thousands of visitors each year. Also, Corinth had its subtle and accomplished reasoners, world-renowned philosophers, whom Paul challenged so boldly in I Corinthians 1:18-25. Thus Corinth was at that time a *thoroughly cosmopolitan city*, so that those whom Paul had reached for Christ there inevitably were people of almost all nations and tongues. The Corinthian church therefore was unquestionably a thoroughly cosmopolitan church (See **Introduction** – Corinth in Paul's Day) and the author's *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, Vol. III, Pp. 116-119, hardback). Its membership included people from many nations and languages. Indeed, Paul, with his gift of tongues, was mightily used to preach the gospel of the grace of God to these people to begin with, and now the Corinthian believers who had this gift might have been greatly used for the building up of the babes in Christ in their midst, but the gift they possessed evidently did not include the languages of those present. Otherwise, people *in their midst* could have testified: "This man is speaking *our* language," and would have rejoiced at the encouragement. As it was, however, Paul had to say,

"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God, FOR NO MAN UNDERSTANDETH HIM. (I Cor. 14:2).

He did not say, "Only a few at best can understand," but "*no man understandeth him.*" And the passage as a whole confirms the fact that the tongues spoken at the Corinthian church were *unknown* to those present and, in some cases at least, to the speaker himself. Let us now examine the passage with this in view.

THE PASSAGE EXAMINED: Please consider carefully the following propositions:

1. There can be no question that the tongues spoken at Jerusalem at Pentecost were *known* tongues; the gift bestowed upon the apostles and disciples in order to reach quickly the thousands of Jews who were there "*from every nation under heaven*" (Acts 2:5). Indeed their hearers testified to this, exclaiming, "*How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*" with no less than 15 different nationalities being enumerated ([Acts 2:8-11](#)).

2. Later, when the uncircumcised Gentiles at Cornelius' home also received the gift of tongues, Peter said: "The Spirit fell on them *as on us at the beginning*" and:

"Forasmuch then as God gave them *the like gift as He did unto us*, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15,17).

Evidently, then, these first Gentiles to receive Christ, also spoke with known tongues.

3. But now, at Corinth, we find Gentiles who spoke with unknown tongues." We base this argument, not on the translation of I Cor. 14 in the *King James Version*, but on clear statements from the passage itself, for Ver. 2 clearly states:

"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, SPEAKETH NOT UNTO MEN, but unto God: FOR NO MAN UNDERSTANDETH HIM. . ." (Ver. 2).

This fact is confirmed by clear statements in the rest of the chapter:

Ver. 4: "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue *pray that he may interpret.*"

Ver. 13: "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue *pray that he may interpret.*" [i.e., otherwise he will not be understood.]"

Ver. 14: "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but *my understanding is unfruitful.*"

Ver. 16: ". . . *he understandeth not what thou sayest.*"

Ver. 23: "If ... all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, *will they not say that ye are mad?*"

Ver. 27: "if any man speak in an unknown tongue ... *let one interpret.*"

Ver. 28: "*But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.*"

Surely this is cumulative evidence that the believers at Corinth spoke in *unknown* tongues.

4. Elsewhere we read of "new tongues" (Mark 16:17), "our tongues" (Acts 2:11), "other tongues" (I Cor. 14:21), "diversities of tongues" (I Cor. 12:28), "the tongues of men and of angels" (I Cor. 13:1), but evidently the Corinthians spoke with unknown tongues, tongues their hearers did not understand. How did this come about?

5. Paul said: "I thank my God, I speak with tongues<sup>125</sup> more than ye all" (I Cor. 14:18). Surely it is only reasonable to assume that this was because he

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<sup>125</sup> *His* evidently known tongues.

proclaimed the gospel to people of so many different nationalities. He could not, upon entering some new country, take a year or two to learn their language, as do our missionaries to Africa and other foreign lands. For this reason God gave him the gift of tongues, which in itself would go far to convince his hearers of the truth of his message (See [Rom. 15:18,19](#)). Was not this also the basic reason for the gift of tongues among the Corinthians? We have seen what a cosmopolitan city Corinth was, and the gift of tongues would surely help the believers to dispense their message of grace with greater dispatch. Nor do we doubt that in their earlier days this is just what caused the Corinthian church to grow so large so soon.

But now we read of their speaking in *unknown* tongues. How did this come about? Surely it was not an advantage over speaking with *known* tongues as at Pentecost.

6. In the light of the Scriptures we have thus far considered, does it not seem more than probable that it was their carnality, their spiritual irresponsibility, that brought this about? They still made much of tongues, parading and flaunting their gift although no one understood them when they used it - not even their interpreters (if such were present), for it was not merely one who understood - there were *none* - but one who had "the *gift* of interpretation" whom God could enlighten supernaturally to know what had been said.

And if it was disappointing that these Corinthian believers so misused these gifts in a day when they were still in order, what shall be said of believers today, long after these gifts have been "done away," who voice inarticulate gibberish that cannot possibly be any earthly language, and call it "the gift of tongues" or "the language of heaven"?

Certainly the "Pentecostalists" of our day are *not* recovering the *Pentecostal* gift of tongues, for then they would be understood by their hearers of other languages and would need no interpreters.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: There are still several details which must be briefly discussed before we leave this section of I Corinthians 14:

*Ver. 1: "but rather that ye may prophesy."* No less than seven times in this one chapter the apostle emphasizes the importance of prophecy over tongues. In addition to the inferiority of the Corinthians' gift of tongues, this was doubtless because the Scriptures and the revelation of the mystery were still incomplete. During this transition period the gift of prophecy gave the Church much-needed help as to its message and program.

Now that the Scriptures *are* complete, however, we can say, "Thus saith the Lord," only when pointing to the Scriptures - and only when "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15), for while all Scripture is *for* us, and is given for our profit, not all Scripture was addressed to us or written about us (See [Rom. 11:13](#); [Eph. 3:1-4](#)).

*Vers. 6,14: "If I come unto you speaking with tongues .... if I pray in an unknown tongue."* Note: the word "unknown" does not appear in Ver. 6, doubtless because Paul would not come to them with unknown tongues. Yet the word does occur in Ver. 14. Actually both statements, however, are only *theoretical propositions*: "If I come." What would speaking in tongues profit the hearers if he had no constructive purpose in doing so (Ver. 6). But if he prayed in an *unknown* tongue even his own understanding would be unfruitful.

*Ver. 9: "words easy to be understood."* This involves not only speaking in tongues (which the audience couldn't understand anyway) but also the temptation to appear highly intellectual to the audience by using "great swelling words" of men's wisdom. This was a natural temptation to the Corinthian believers, with Corinth a renowned center of learning. Paul's aim, however, was always to make the truth *clear* to his hearers rather than to make himself sound profound (See [I Cor. 2:4,5](#)).

*Vers. 12,26: "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."* These verses explain why the apostle promoted prophecy over tongues, especially unknown tongues. "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue," he declares, "*edifieth himself* - but he that prophesieth *edifieth the church*" (Ver. 4). The latter should always be the believer's chief objective where his service to the church is concerned. Thus, though the dispensational *program* may change, the moral and spiritual principles remain the same.

*Ver. 13: "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."* The speaker in unknown tongues, says the apostle, should pray that he may also be given the gift of interpretation. Otherwise he may experience what this writer has witnessed on several occasions. The chairman of the meeting asks: "Is there anyone here who can interpret what this brother has said?" But no one present had the gift of interpretation. Therefore "*if there be no interpreter,*" the apostle goes on to say, "*let him keep silence in the church. . . .*" (Ver. 28). So important is it that the hearers *understand* what is being said, so that they may be edified, rather than merely excited emotionally.

*Ver. 15: "I will sing with the understanding also."* In saying that he will sing (or pray) with the *spirit* and with the *understanding*, the apostle does not have *two* ways of singing in mind, but one. He does not mean, "I will sing *with tongues* and with the *understanding also*." Indeed, it is a great mistake to suppose that speaking in tongues is necessarily speaking in the Holy Spirit. In the light of what he has already said, the apostle means here that it is his desire to sing (or pray) *both* with his spirit *and* with his understanding.

This statement thus also has a general application to the singing of hymns. In this day when hundreds of hymnbooks, with thousands of hymns are being published, true believers should examine these with care before using them. How

many sentimental hymns with no message at all, or with perversions of the truth, are being sung in our churches!<sup>126</sup>

*Vers. 16,23,24: "the unlearned."* This refers not to the uneducated, but to those who were uninformed and uninstructed *as to the gift of tongues*. Thus if at the Corinthian church all (the speakers) spoke in unknown tongues, how could the uninformed possibly conclude: "*God is in you of a truth*"? (Ver. 24).

*Ver. 18: "I speak in tongues more than ye all."* If the gift of tongues enabled Paul to immediately evangelize people of various nationalities, why is this not mentioned in the record of Acts? Doubtless this would have made the book more interesting and exciting *for us*, but God did not write the Bible for our entertainment. Thus we have here another example of *selective inspiration*. Had Paul's *use* of tongues been included in the record of his ministry it would have placed still greater emphasis upon a passing gift which in itself already tended to be over-emphasized. The important thing in Paul's ministry was not a miraculous gift, but the message of grace he proclaimed to a lost world ([Acts 20:24](#)).

*Ver. 19: "In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."*

Think. Paul made this declaration while the gift of tongues still belonged to God's program for His people. If only our modern Pentecostals would take it to heart! Why do they so earnestly *desire* to speak with tongues? As a confirmation of their salvation? Because it provides an emotional thrill? Certainly not to make themselves understood to those of other languages, for if this were so we would not be presented with the incongruous spectacle of a renowned Pentecostal evangelist, sometimes speaking briefly in "tongues" over television, yet using an interpreter when addressing more than 40,000 hearers in a foreign land! Does this not confirm Paul's declaration that the gift of tongues was to "cease" as more mature truth was revealed ([I Cor. 13:8,11; 14:20](#)), so that the present "tongues" movement is not of God but of Satan? Further, who, understanding the teachings of Ephesians as to the Holy Spirit, would wish for physical signs of God's presence and power?

THE ORDERLY USE OF PROPHECY: *I Cor. 14:29-33*: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

"If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

"For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

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<sup>126</sup> President Woodrow Wilson is said to have called "*Beautiful Isle of Somewhere*," the silliest hymn ever written - but many others surely run a close second.

"And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

No doubt the reader has already noticed the emphasis on *order* in the earlier part of this chapter where tongues are concerned. Here he deals with the orderly use of *prophecy*.

The prophets were to speak two or three at a time (in order, of course-Ver. 31), and the others were to judge. Then perhaps the singing of a hymn, a testimony, or the like, for bodies and minds can become weary even in discussing spiritual things!

The subject of the first prophecy would doubtless suggest another phase of the same subject by another, thus, "if anything be revealed to another that sitteth by" the first should "hold his peace" (Ver. 30). One person should not dominate the service, indeed any prophecy was to be discussed by those who heard. And how would they judge whether or not the prophet had declared the truth? By the same method as the Bereans; they would search the Scriptures they had, to make certain that the Word of God had not been contradicted or perverted. The Bereans unquestionably heard truths from Paul that he had received *by revelation*. They gave him an objective hearing, however, and, searching the Scriptures, soon found that he had indeed received a further revelation from the glorified Lord.

It should be carefully noted that the Corinthian church was still in a state of transition. Nothing is said here about the authority of a pastor. Thus some have objected that a pastorate inevitably becomes a "one man ministry." They conclude from this chapter that *all* may speak as the Spirit leads. The trouble is, that too often it appears to be the one most anxious to be heard who rises to speak. Here is where our beloved *Plymouth Brethren* have erred.

Shall we pattern our church order after instructions given to a church still exercising the gifts of tongues and prophecy? Surely not completely. For church order today we should consult Paul's *Pastoral Epistles* (his last) where, indeed, the Spirit instructs us as to "*how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God*" (I Tim. 3:15). Also, we should thoughtfully consider the gifts enumerated in Eph. 4:11, where apostles, prophets, "pastors and teachers,"<sup>127</sup> (or "teaching pastors") are named *in that order* (cf. I Cor. 12:28). Also, note that all the gifts here are *persons*: no sign gifts are mentioned here or anywhere in the prison epistles.

The local church today is not to be, as some have thought, a place where "religion" is discussed and where all should have their say. Indeed, even here in I Cor. 14, the apostle *limits* the number of those who may participate in the service.

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<sup>127</sup> Note: the word "some" does not occur before "teachers." The "pastors and teachers" are one. A true pastor *teaches, or feeds*, his flock (Acts 20:28).

No, modern religious zealots, and the new evangelicalism, may cry for more *dialogue*, but God says that in the church it should be *monologue*. The "man of God" is entrusted with a message he should faithfully proclaim regardless of rising apostasy (II Tim. 4:1-5), and elders and deacons are appointed or elected to help him in the work (I Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5-9). Thus Bible exposition has now taken the place of prophecy (cf. Eph. 4:11).

But the church at Corinth was not the Church of today. They did not, like us, have the whole Word of God in their hands. Rather they had prophets to *confirm* what Paul was preaching by direct revelation from the glorified Lord. These tended to become over-zealous as God gave them further light on the truth. We can sympathize with them in this in the light of II Cor. 12:7 and our own joy at receiving new light from the Word. But as a result of their zeal disorder sometimes followed. Hence his exhortation to them to speak as opportunity arose-not all at once; and his assurance that "ye may all prophesy one by one." Perhaps a brother with a revelation did not get an opportunity to speak this Sunday, but he will next Sunday or the next. Be patient!

Mark well, the apostle holds the prophets responsible to control their own spirits in this. The heathen about them were controlled by demons. Hence the wild orgies of pagan worship.

But the Spirit of God teaches love, patience and self-control. Thus Paul says, pointedly:

"And the spirits of the prophets are *subject* to the *prophets*" (Ver. 32).

Here he refers, not to the Spirit of God (to whom they should all be subject) but to "*the spirits of the prophets*" - their own spirits. They, each one personally, were responsible to practice the self-control which the Spirit of God teaches. They could not, like the heathen, plead involuntary obedience to some spirit being, for while the Holy Spirit teaches, leads, enlightens, helps, He does *not* subject the saints to forced obedience.

Thus the apostle would have the Church presented to the world as thoughtful, sensible, orderly,

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (Ver. 33).

If it was sad, in that day of limited light, to behold the confusion that gripped the young but prosperous Corinthian church, how unspeakably sad to behold segments of the Church today where confusion and disorder are thought to be the working of the Spirit! This writer has attended many such services, where the scenes presented could only be described as pure bedlam, ruling in the name of

spirituality. And this while we have [Eph. 1:3,9,15-23; 2:4-6; 3:1-21; 4:1-16; Col. 1:9-14](#) and [3:1-4](#) in our Bibles!

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: *I Cor. 14:34,35*: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

"And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

With the *Women's Liberation Movement* in full force in our day this passage is "an hard saying" for some Christian women to accept. Yet sincere believers bow in obedience before the Word of God. It is enough for them that "*God hath spoken.*"

In view of the confusion existing in the Corinthian assembly, it is not to be wondered at that their women became more free to speak out during their services than was becoming.

From *I Cor. 11:5* it is evident that it was acceptable for women to "pray or prophesy" in the service, but here the apostle evidently refers to more casual talk which, however, sometimes became intrusive and only added to the confusion.

This the apostle forbids in strong language. This is "*not permitted to them,*" he says (Ver. 34). Using the same Greek word, *epistrepo*, in *I Tim. 2:12*, he says, "*I suffer not [I do not allow] a woman to teach, or to usurp authority over, the man.*"<sup>128</sup> And in this passages he goes farther: She must "keep silence," she must be "under obedience," for "it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (Vers. 33,34).

Here we can almost hear someone say, "He's bringing us back under the Law again." But no, the apostle of grace will not bring us under the Law of Moses. This is evident from the words "*as also,*" in Ver. 34: "*as also saith the law.*" How beautiful these nuances of Scripture, these fine shades of meaning that can make such a difference. The relationship between man and woman and especially between husband and wife is not something Paul invented, much less which he received from the glorified Lord. This is a *creation law*, going back not merely to the Ten Commandments, but to the very first chapters of Genesis, which is the first section of the "Book of the Law," the five books of Moses.

Gen. 2:18: "I will make him an help meet for him."

Gen. 3:16: "He shall rule over thee."

*I Pet. 3:5*: "The holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands" (cf. [Gen. 18:6-12](#)).

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<sup>128</sup> I.e., to teach a man or to usurp authority over him.

It has been said by some that Christianity, and Paul, liberated women from bondage. We reply, Yes, from the bondage of paganism, but not from deportment becoming to a woman, for *no one has more to say on this subject than Paul*. In addition to the passage before us, coming from Paul's heart and pen, we have the following:

I Cor. 11:8,9: "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.

"Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man."

Eph. 5:22-24: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Savior of the body.

"Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Col. 3:18: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord."

I Tim. 2:11-14: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over, the man, but to be in silence.

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

Tit. 2:4-5: "That they teach the young women ... to love their husbands, to ... be obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed."

Add these passages from the pen of Paul and those from Genesis to the extended one we have been considering and it is evident that Paul did *not* liberate women from God's expressed will regarding their relationship with the man, but rather had much to say by way of emphasizing God's will in the matter.

While our purpose here is to expound the passage before us, it should be pointed out that Paul also has much to say about the man's Christian attitude toward the woman, and the husband's toward his wife. We call special attention to Eph. 5:25, where we read:

"Husbands, love *your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it.*"

The writer has often said of the husband who truly seeks to obey this exhortation: "What woman wouldn't want to live for a man like that!"

THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEN: *I Cor. 14:36,37*: "What? Came the Word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?"

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

It appears from the above that, as in our day, some Christian men even encouraged the women in their rebellion, practically making their own rules on the subject, doubtless advancing many of the arguments we hear from the supporters of "Women's Lib" today. Herein the irresponsibility of the men was a greater sin than the rebellion among the women. This the apostle deals with also-and in no gentle terms.

"What?" he asks: "*Came the Word of God out from you?*" i.e., did it originate with you? "*Or, came it unto you only?*" Are you the only custodians of it? And then this strong apostolic challenge - with overwhelming evidence among them and about them of its validity:

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (Ver. 37).

And then the stern rebuke: "If any man be ignorant," i.e., willfully ignorant, "*let him be ignorant*": such will have to suffer the consequences of his own folly.

FINAL EXHORTATION: *I Cor. 14:39,40*: "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

"Let all things be done decently and in order. "

The apostle closes this section of his epistle in a conciliatory manner, with a loving exhortation.

In exhorting them to *covet* prophecy, while not *forbidding* tongues, he states in a word what he has been teaching throughout the chapter. With the Scriptures and his revelation from the glorified Lord as yet incomplete the gift of prophecy still had considerable value, while that of tongues, much less. Soon both were to pass away (13:8). Meantime, and always: "*Let all things be done decently<sup>129</sup> and in order.*" How much would be gained, in the Church at large and especially in the charismatic segment of the Church, if this exhortation were heeded!

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<sup>129</sup> Properly, in a becoming manner.

## CHAPTER XV

### *I Corinthians 15:1-58*

PAUL AND HIS GOSPEL: *I Cor. 15:1-4*: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand:

"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

"And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."<sup>130</sup>

Paul is very specific here. He says "this is THE GOSPEL WHICH I PREACHED UNTO YOU ... *wherein ye stand ... by which also ye are saved.*" Thus of all the important passages in the Word of God, this is surely one to which we should pay most earnest heed, for it tells what God's message of salvation is for us today and how God saves sinners.

There is something about this passage, however, that troubles some sincere believers. They ask: "If this passage contains the gospel which remained a secret until revealed to Paul, why does he state that Christ both died and rose again '*according to the Scriptures*'?" Well, Christ did, as a matter of *fact*, die and rise again according to the Scriptures; nor does this imply that what Paul *had to say about* His death and resurrection was a prophesied message rather than part of the mystery revealed to him.

Paul clearly states here that this is "the gospel which I preached unto you," and this was not the gospel which the twelve had been preaching. Otherwise he would not habitually use such phrases as: "*my gospel*" (Three times: [Rom. 2:16](#); [16:25](#); [11 Tim. 2:7,8](#)); "*our gospel*" (Three times: [11 Cor. 4:3](#); [I Thes. 1:5](#); [II Thes. 2:14](#)); "*the gospel which I preached unto you*" ([I Cor. 15: 1](#)); "*the gospel which was preached of me*" ([Gal. 1:11](#)); "*that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles*" ([Gal 2:2](#)); and "that [gospel] which we preached unto you" ([Gal. 1:8](#)). Nor would he have had to go specially to Jerusalem to communicate to the leaders there "*a message which they were already preaching.*" Much less would he have had to do this "privately" ([Gal. 2:2](#)).

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<sup>130</sup> The phrases, "*if ye keep in memory*" and "*unless ye have believed in vain,*" by no means teach that the saved may be lost again. The "if" is a hypothesis as in [Ver. 16](#). Of course they remembered the great basic truths he had taught them, but they were acting as if they had forgotten them, even doubting the resurrection of the body. And, as [Vers. 13,14](#) declare: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then ... your faith *is also vain.*"

At Pentecost Peter had *charged* his Jewish hearers with the death of Christ and when, convicted they asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" he did not reverse himself and preach the cross as good news. Rather he said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . ." (Acts 2:38).

Obviously, then, Paul's gospel was *not* that which the twelve had been preaching. In fact *theirs* was called "*the gospel of the kingdom*," while *his* is called "*the gospel of the grace of God*" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Acts 20:24). *Theirs*, right through Pentecost, concerned *the throne* (Acts 2:29-36), while *his* concerned *the cross* (I Cor. 1:18,23).

Further, the apostle says here in I Cor. 15:3: "*I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.*" This and similar phraseology is familiar to Paul when referring to the revelation he received from the glorified Lord in heaven (cf. I Cor. 11:23; 1 Thes. 4:15). And if all these passages from the Word of God be not enough, we have the clearest, most emphatic, assurance as to this from Paul's own testimony in Gal. 1:11,12:

"But *I certify you* brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

"For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but [I received it] BY THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."

How can our denominational brethren refuse all this testimony to the separate and distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul? How could the spirit have stated it more clearly? How could He have insisted upon it more consistently?

Nowhere in the Old Testament Scriptures do we read that Christ would die and be raised again in three days *for the sins of the world*.

Isaiah 53, to which our opponents so often refer, does *not* say "all *men*" but "all *we*" and "*us all*," for Isaiah speaks as a Hebrew prophet, saying, "for the transgression of my *people* was He stricken" (Ver. 8). True, the Old Testament contains many prophecies about Christ, but all was purposely couched in veiled language and in types that could only be understood after Christ, the Antitype, had appeared. And what the cross had *accomplished* could not be revealed until the raising up of Paul, the chief of sinners saved by grace. He represented both Jew and Gentile, being both a *born Hebrew* and a *born Roman* (Acts 22:3,25,26).

In any case, the apostle does not say here in I Cor. 15:3,4, that his message about the crucifixion and resurrection was the *fulfillment* of prophecy. This would have been untrue. Rather he says that it was "according to," or in accordance with, prophecy. As the Bereans found out, there was nothing in prophecy to

contradict his message and much to confirm it indirectly. Note: he quotes no prophecy from the Old Testament to the effect that Christ would die for the sins of all - including the Gentiles, for there is none.

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS: The world will gladly listen to preaching about "the baby Jesus" or "the carpenter of Nazareth," or "the man of Galilee." They will gladly listen to the story of His life, but bring them to the cross and they back away.

The preaching of the cross embarrasses the Jew. To him Christ crucified is a constant "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." He complains with his fathers: "*Ye intend to bring this man's blood upon us*" (Acts 5:28).

To the Gentiles the preaching of the cross is foolishness. They laugh and say: "He could not save Himself! How can He save others? He could not save them by His life! How can He save them by His death?"

Thank God, what seems so foolish and illogical to them proves to be the only reasonable plan of salvation. We who have been saved are thrilled and proud of Christ; we love and adore Him, because He *did not save Himself so that He might save us, for "Christ died FOR our sins."*

Here, at Calvary, are solved for us the two greatest riddles of all time: that of the death of Christ and that of the sin of man. Why did God forsake His beloved Son? Why did He allow wicked men to outrage and crucify the sinless, harmless Christ? You will find the answer only when you ask why *mankind (represented by Saul)* hated and hounded Christ to His death. God's action was the only antidote to man's. Christ's death was the only remedy for man's sin. It was because of the utter unreasonableness of man's sin that God, to save him, had to be more than reasonable.

"*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*" These two questions represent the greatest riddles of all history, yet, strangely, one is the simple explanation of the other! One is complementary to the other!

That "Christ died" is a historical fact that everyone knows. "Our sins" also constitute a fact which no one can deny. But either of these facts *alone* remains an insoluble problem. We must bring the two together with the little preposition "for" between, accepting God's explanation that "*Christ died FOR our sins.*"

In the two "whys" we here consider, the problems of sin and salvation are solved. The Savior and the sinner are brought together. The blasphemer, the persecutor, is thoroughly transformed and the Savior is glorified. This is what Paul's great message was all about and from it flowed "the exceeding riches of [God's] grace" to us (Eph. 1:7-10).

Man's sinful nature has always been an undeniable *fact* - but also an insoluble riddle to the unsaved. Why did God create man, knowing he would sin? Why did He permit sin? and many other questions. To them all there are many fragmentary answers, but the great, fundamental answer is that "*Christ died for our sins.*" As to the Lord Jesus Christ, even secular history agrees that He was at the very least a *good* man. And here a God who is supposed to be just and loving, lets cruel and wicked men nail His Son to a tree where He dies in agony and disgrace. How could such a God be either loving or just, if it is not true that "*Christ died for our sins*"? and that this was purposed "*in Christ Jesus before the world began*" (II Tim. 1:9).

So, beloved, the secret of salvation, the key to heaven is contained in this simple statement of "five words" (I Cor. 14:19): "*Christ died for our sins*" (I Cor. 15:3). And Paul, the chief of sinners, now saved by grace, was the herald and the living demonstration of this glorious truth.

THE FOCAL POINT OF THE GOSPEL: While it is true that the gospel Paul proclaimed included the death, burial and resurrection of Christ - *and* His coming to receive His own unto Himself (Vers. 51-53), even this is not "the whole gospel," for surely "the gospel of the grace of God" must include the good news of all the riches of His grace as unfolded to us in the Epistles of Paul. And surely one must believe in a risen, living Christ to be saved (Vers. 2,4; cf [Rom. 10:9,10](#)), but is it not true that most, if not all, who hear the gospel from our lips understand fully that we proclaim one whom we believe to be living in heaven? Thus the focal point of Paul's message was *the cross*. Sincere believers who hold that in order to preach the whole gospel we should *mention* the resurrection of Christ along with His crucifixion *every time we preach*, should take note of the fact that Paul often mentions the crucifixion apart from any mention whatsoever of the resurrection; the resurrection, of course, being pre-supposed. We give but a few of many, many examples:

"I determined not to know anything among you, save *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (I Cor. 2:2).

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, *lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*

"For the preaching of *the cross* is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved *it is the power of God*" (I Cor. 1:17,18).

"But *we preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God*" (I Cor. 1:23,24).

We have chosen only a few such passages from I Corinthians itself, but the rest of Paul's epistles are literally filled with the cross, the death and the blood of Christ.

Please note carefully that the apostle *calls* his gospel '*the preaching of the cross*' (1:18), and as we have seen, the fact that "*Christ died for our sins*" solves the otherwise insoluble riddles of the death of Christ and the sin of man. It should also be noted that Paul's good news *begins* with the death of the cross. Peter *charged* his hearers with the death of Christ, but the mystery revealed through Paul changed the blame and accusation to *good news*, for Paul proclaimed the cross always and only AS GOOD NEWS:

We are "*reconciled to God by the death of His Son*" (Rom. 5:10).

"By the grace of God [He] *tasted death for every man*" (Heb. 2:9).

"*Through death*" He destroyed the devil, and delivered those who, "*through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*" (Heb. 2:14,15).

". . . now *in Christ Jesus*, ye who sometimes were far off, are *made nigh by the blood of Christ* (Eph. 2:13).

". . . having made peace *through the blood of His cross*. (Col. 1:20).

"in whom we have *redemption through His blood*, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

How many more such statements from the pen of Paul could be cited!

THE WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION: *1 Cor. 15:5-11*: "And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve;

"After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

"After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

"And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

"Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

While the cross was indeed the focal point of Paul's great message of grace, it does not follow that the resurrection of our Lord was a secondary consideration in his doctrine. Indeed he probably discusses the resurrection of Christ, and

therefore of the believer, at greater length here than he discusses any other subject of Christian doctrine.<sup>131</sup>

Simon Greenleaf, of Harvard fame and one of America's greatest jurists, declared that there is more evidence for the bodily resurrection of Christ, than for any other major event in history. The more this writer has studied about the resurrection of the body in general and the bodily resurrection of Christ in particular, the more deeply he is convicted of the truth of Greenleaf's statement. The Apostle Paul does not discuss all this evidence in I Cor. 15, but he surely offers enough to completely silence the skeptic.

First, the apostle declares that "He was *seen*" by hundreds of people after His resurrection. We cannot here point out how conclusive this is in itself, but be it noted that the lives of Peter and the twelve were all revolutionized by the resurrection of Christ. Cowardice was changed into the rarest type of courage, doubt into unshakable faith, and sorrow into radiant joy.

Specifically, the apostle states that He was "seen of Cephas" and "*then* of the Twelve." The term, "the Twelve" is used as an official title, for the risen Lord could not have appeared to His twelve apostles, since one of them, Judas, was now dead. And if this passage refers to [John 20:19-23](#), even Thomas was not present (Ver. 24). Often our Lord's apostles were called "the Twelve," officially, whether or not all twelve were present.

It should be further noted that Paul here distinguishes himself from our Lord's twelve apostles. He was not, as some have taught, God's man for Judas' place. Acts 1:26 and 2:4 are but two of many absolute *proofs* that Paul *could not even* have qualified for a place among the Twelve, and the Scriptures plainly state that Matthias was Judas' successor.

"*After that,*" says the apostle, our risen Lord "*was seen of above five hundred brethren at once*" (Ver. 6). This may well have taken place at the meeting of [Matt. 28:16](#). Mark well that Paul says of these five hundred witnesses that "the greater part remain unto this present," (although some had "fallen asleep") and could bear witness to Christ's resurrection along with Peter and the Twelve. If, then, Paul was incorrect here, or bearing false witness, is it not reasonable to conclude that *something* should be found in the many writings left from his day to refute it? Would not *someone* from this multitude who were supposed to have seen Him, have risen to say: "I was there, but I did not see Jesus Christ risen from the dead." But of all the writings from Paul's day still extant no such denial has been brought to light.

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<sup>131</sup> Indeed, I Corinthians 15 alone is longer, or larger, than five whole *books* of the Bible: Obadiah, Philemon, 2<sup>nd</sup> John, 3<sup>rd</sup> John and Jude. While our Lord's *burial* is only mentioned, and not discussed, in this chapter, it too is vitally important in the light of Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12.

"*After that,*" says Paul in Ver. 7, "He was seen of James; *then* of all the apostles." Evidently he refers here to the James of the apostles, "Peter, James and John," not to James the Lord's half brother, for he goes on to say that next He was seen of "*all* the apostles," perhaps in the meeting of [John 20:26-29](#). In any case we know that now all the living members of "the Twelve" were present. And this brings us to the greatest of all witnesses to the resurrection of Christ: Paul himself:

THE WITNESS OF PAUL HIMSELF: Ver. 8: "And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

Paul saw Christ, not on one or two occasions, but again and again. His testimony is by all odds the most conclusive. At his conversion the Lord said to him:

"*I have appeared unto thee* for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16).

And when Ananias was sent to restore his sight, he said:

"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, *that thou shouldst . . . see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of His mouth*" (Acts 22:14).

At his return to Jerusalem Paul saw the Lord again:

"*[I] saw Him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me*" (Acts 22:18).

Add to these such passages as [Acts 18:9; 27:23; I Cor. 11:23; 15:3; II Cor. 12:1,2; Gal. 1:11,12; and I Thes. 4:17](#), and who can wonder that the apostle challenges the Corinthians:

"Am I not an apostle? ... *Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are ye not my work in the Lord?*" (I Cor. 9:1).

BORN OUT OF DUE TIME: [I Cor. 15:8](#): This passage further reveals, however, that the risen Lord was seen by Saul, "as of one born *out of due time*," i.e., in an untimely or premature birth. Since Israel's conversion is admittedly still future, Saul's conversion is said to have been typical of hers and not of ours. This is also said with reference to I Tim. 1: 16, where Paul is presented as "*a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.*" This, it is said, refers to Israel, not to us.

We do not deny - we heartily agree - that Saul's conversion was typical of Israel's, but perhaps those who contend that *therefore* he is *not* our pattern in salvation have overlooked the fact that as one born "*out of,*" or *before* the due time he has a *closer* relationship to us than he has to Israel. Let us ask a few questions to demonstrate this:

When, according to prophecy, is the *due time* for Israel to be saved: past, present, or future? The answer, of course, is *future*. And when is the *due time* for the Gentiles to be saved? Also *future*, for the Gentiles, according to prophecy, are to be saved *through redeemed Israel* ([Gen. 22:17,18](#); [Zech. 8:13](#), *et al*).

Therefore, when a Jew *today* believes and becomes a member of the Body of Christ, is he saved *in* or *out of* due time? on the basis of covenants and promises, or by grace? according to prophecy, or according to the mystery revealed through Paul? Likewise, when a Gentile *today* believes and becomes a member of the Body of Christ, is he saved *in* or *out of* due time? The answers to these questions are obvious. Both believing Jews and Gentiles today are saved by grace according to the mystery revealed through Paul, entirely apart from any covenant or promise.<sup>132</sup>

Thus the Apostle Paul has a closer relationship to God's people today than he does to redeemed Israel of the future, for we, like Paul, have been born "out of due time," by grace alone.

**THE LIVING DEMONSTRATION OF GRACE ABOUNDING:** We must not forget that the same person who says in 11 Cor. 11:5: "*I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles,*" says here in I Cor. 15:9,10: "*I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God, BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM.*"

In immediate conjunction with Paul's "boasting" we have his acknowledgment that he himself is nothing. In other passages he calls himself the chief of sinners and less than the least of all saints, but in each case he magnifies God's grace in making him what he now is. The glorious fact was that God had taken Saul, the guilty rebel, and had made him the herald and the living example of His infinite grace. When Paul defends or exalts his own apostleship as, on occasion, he vigorously does, he does so, not for the glory of Paul, but for the glory of God; not to exalt himself, but the grace of God. It is interesting to note how again and again he associates his apostleship with the riches of God's grace. We cite but a few examples:

Rom. 1:5: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship....."

Rom. 12:3: "For I say through the grace given unto me..."

Rom. 15:15: "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you . . . because of the grace that is given to me of God. . . ."

Eph. 3:8: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

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<sup>132</sup> Save the promise God made to Himself in eternity past (Tit. 1:2; II Tim. 1:9).

Doubtless the greatest passage along this line is found in I Tim. 1:12-16, where "*the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant*" to the chief of sinners, "*for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him [Christ] to life everlasting.*" (For further light on this subject see the author's *Saul the Sinner and Paul the Boaster.*)

Thank God, the grace shown to Paul was not in vain, but he "labored more abundantly than they all"<sup>133</sup> (I Cor. 15:10), again hastening to add: "*yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*"

IF CHRIST BE NOT RISEN: I Cor. 15:12-19: "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins.

"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

The finished, all-sufficient redemption wrought by Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and His *present power* to save sinners, was the very theme of the message which had wrought the mighty miracle that was the Corinthian Church. How then, asks Paul, do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? Have the Corinthian philosophers gotten to you? Well, then, let's use a bit of philosophy, and a bit of logic:

"If there be no resurrection of the dead then," [unquestionably], "is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain"<sup>134</sup> (Vers. 13,14).

But more than this: "if Christ be not risen," says the apostle, "we are found false witnesses of God," having testified that God raised Christ from the dead. Indeed Paul had solemnly declared that he had *seen* the risen Christ and had heard Him

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<sup>133</sup> "They all," referring not to the twelve, but to his colaborers among the Corinthians.

<sup>134</sup> Gr., *kenos*, "to no purpose"; we preached and you believed what was not so.

speak (Acts 22:14 *et al*). Had this great church, then, amid so much opposition and persecution, been founded on the word of a liar? "If Christ be not risen," says the apostle in effect, "this is the conclusion you must come to."

The apostle now proceeds from his subjective argument to an objective argument:

"If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain: *ye are yet in your sins*." Indeed, "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (Vers. 16-18).

What an appalling conclusion! Poor souls saved from the darkness and hopelessness of paganism would *perish*, not merely physically, because they would not rise from the dead, for then their spirits might yet enjoy eternal bliss, but because "if the dead rise not *then is Christ not risen*," so that He is no more able to save from sin than is Buddha, Confucius, or any other dead god of paganism. How fitting, then, is the apostle's conclusion: "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*." Why "of all men"? because the representatives of pagan gods at least offered future bliss for the spirit, but the believer in Christ has no hope whatever "if Christ be not risen."

BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN: *I Cor. 15:20-28*: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

"For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

"For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him.

"And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS: In considering the above passage we must bear in mind important truths previously enunciated with regard to Christ and bodily

resurrection. First, a broad statement is made on this subject by divine inspiration in John 1:4, where we read of the Lord Jesus Christ:

*"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."*

All life: whether at its original reception or in restoration comes directly from Him. And it is this *life* that produces *light*, or awareness, whether physical or spiritual.

Further, if we believe in the integrity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, we must cite also what He said with respect to Himself and bodily resurrection, for in connection with the resurrection of Lazarus, He said:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Note: He did not say here: "I will rise," but "I am the resurrection and the life." Others had been raised from the dead before Him, but *He* arose by His own power. Indeed, He stated this clearly in John 10:17,18:

". . . I lay down My life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. . . ."

Thus, referring here in I Cor. 15 to the resurrection of believers, the apostle declares that Christ, risen from the dead, has become "the firstfruits" of their resurrection.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (I Co. 15:21).

Note the words, "by man," i.e., by *mankind*. Two *families* of mankind are here in view: that of Adam and that of Christ (See Vers. 45,47-49). This is important to bear in mind as we come to Ver. 22:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Those who teach Universal Reconciliation make the latter part of this verse to read, "*even so in Christ shall all men be made alive.*" But how can men be made alive in Christ who are not "in Christ" to begin with?

Thus as all who are in Adam die, so all who are in Christ shall be made alive; Adam communicating death to all who are in him, and Christ communicating life to all who are in Him.

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION: The above is further confirmed by the fact that when the apostle deals with the order of the resurrection he includes only

"Christ" and "they that are Christ's." Indeed, in writing to the Corinthians as members of the Body of Christ, he here includes only such. They will be raised "at His coming" (cf, Vers. 51-53; [1 Thes. 4:13-18](#)). Those kingdom believers who will be raised in the "first [of two] resurrection" of Rev. 20:5 are not mentioned (See [Rev. 20:4,5](#), and cf. [Rev. 4:13](#)). Thus he encourages the *Corinthian believers* with the truth that as Christ was raised from the dead as the "firstfruits," so they will be raised when the Lord comes for His own.

**ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET:** After the rapture of the members of Christ's Body to be with Him, will come the "end," or consummation, as the day of grace gives way to the day of wrath and Christ returns to earth to judge and reign with His kingdom saints for one thousand years:

"For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (Ver. 25; cf. Rev. 20:1-4; [Heb. 2:6-8](#)).

Thus man [redeemed men] will finally be the victor over creation rather than its victim. He will fulfill the original command to "have dominion" over creation and "subdue it," rather than being subjugated by it. This, of course, is all future, but we rejoice in it by faith, for Heb. 2:8,9 declares:

"..... But now we see not yet all things put under Him.

"BUT WE SEE JESUS, WHO WAS MADE [FOR] A LITTLE [WHILE] LOWER THAN THE ANGELS FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH, *CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR*, THAT HE, BY THE GRACE OF GOD SHOULD TASTE [OR BE THE TASTER OF] DEATH FOR EVERY MAN" (Cf. [Eph. 1:19-23](#)).

When finally all of God's enemies have been "destroyed," death will become inoperative. There will be no more left to die. Thus death will be the very last enemy and will also be "destroyed."

**GOD ALL IN ALL:** The teaching of Vers. 27,28 is logical enough for all to understand. The thrust of this passage, however, is the glorious truth that when the Son shall have delivered all over to the Father, then will God be *all in all*. Now God has His rightful place only *partly* in the choicest saint and not at all in the unbeliever. But *then* - what a prospect! - God will be ALL in ALL!<sup>135</sup> The nearest we find to this condition before "the end," is during the millennium, when God's people all over the world will dedicate themselves and their all to their glorious King, the Lord Jesus Christ ([Zech. 14:20,21](#)), but even this will fail at last ([Rev. 20:3,7-9](#)), for God will not be all in all until the last enemy has been destroyed.

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<sup>135</sup> Even the doomed will own His sway. (Ver. 28, cf. Phil. 2:10,11). Note: this all has to do with *subjugation*, not *reconciliation*.

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD: *1 Cor. 15:29-34*: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

"And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame."

Ver. 29 above has long been an enigma to your author. Many a time has he wrestled in vain to find its proper interpretation. Nor has he been alone. Albert Barnes, that able and meticulous student of the Word, wrote as follows, commenting on Ver. 29:

"There is perhaps no passage of the New Testament in respect to which there has been a greater variety of interpretations . . . and the views of expositors now by no means harmonize as to its meaning."

Then he presents a considerable list of different viewpoints taken from *Pool's Synopsis* (now out of print), and, whittling them down to *two*, states his *preference* - merely his preference, explaining that he is not fully satisfied with any interpretation thus far presented.

With the author it has been much the same. In the year 1963, a friend who had studied the matter deeply had already found 26 different interpretations of the passage. He then wrote an article stating his own views, which he titled, *Interpretation Number 27*. But frankly his interpretation did not fully satisfy us either, so with us it remained simply *Interpretation Number 27*.

More recently, as the author examined the various commentaries in his possession he was disappointed to note how many of them *seemed* at this point to be merely efforts to interpret the passage *somehow*, or to cover over an inability to interpret it. So many words and terms were made to mean what they do not say, so often the Greek had to be used, seemingly, as a mere *device* to force a meaning, and so many just did not make sense - at least to a simple person like your author. Thus we began our re-study of this passage with great trepidation, asking the Lord: "Who am I, or what have I done, to deserve to receive *the solution* to this passage that has baffled so many for so long a period of time?" We then pleaded only grace, always recognizing, however, that we must say with our

Savior, *"Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."* Sometimes God would have us *wait* for light.

Now, lest some reader expect immediately to find *the solution* to this difficult passage, we hasten to acknowledge that we do not believe that we have found it. We do feel, however, that we now have a clearer insight into the real thrust of the passage, and pray that each reader may be blessed by it.

First, it must be observed that Paul, here resumes his logical arguments for the resurrection of the body, after the parenthetical digression of Vers. 20-28.

Second, Ver. 29 states clearly that there were people (however few) at that time who were *"baptized for the dead."* These were not pagans, or the argument would be meaningless. But among the believers there were some who practiced this superstitious custom, in which a living believer was baptized for another believer who had died before being baptized.<sup>136</sup>

Whatever the reasons for this practice; whatever its origin, certain believers were being baptized for others who had died without baptism. Thus the apostle, arguing for the truth of the resurrection, asks, "What shall they do?" i.e., when it becomes evident that there is no resurrection. They would be refuting their own beliefs. Obviously, they submit to this baptism with the resurrection of the saints in view.

There appears to be no *record* of such a ceremony being practiced either by the pagans or by the believers. This, it seems, has led many commentators to try to prove that this practice never took place, but that the passage has a "spiritual" interpretation. But we do not need the testimony of history to confirm the Word of God. Certain it is, that this verse, just as it reads, and assuming its validity, is a clear addition to Paul's arguments for the truth of the resurrection, so that his question, *"If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for the dead?"* is most pertinent.

Further the apostle asks about himself and his co-workers: "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" His life was always in jeopardy he says, recalling his contest with veritable "beasts" at Ephesus (Ver. 32; cf. [I Cor. 16:9](#)), and "protesting" on the basis of their rejoicing,<sup>137</sup> that *"I die daily"* (Ver. 31).

Why all this constant risk? Why always in danger of his very life - if the dead rise not? What advantage could there possibly be in this? In that case, he says, evidently quoting a heathen byword: *"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*

But no, we dare not "eat and drink for tomorrow we die," for there *is* a resurrection to come and then an accounting of our life and service for Christ. Thus he continues:

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<sup>136</sup> Recall: baptism and the sign gifts were then still in order.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. [II Cor. 7:14](#).

"Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners"<sup>138</sup> (Ver. 33).

"Awake to *righteousness*, and sin not. . ." (Ver. 34).

There needed to be a great spiritual awakening at the Corinthian Church so that true believers, even if standing all alone, might cease their permissive attitude toward sin.

In closing this section of his argument he says to their shame that some among them "have not the knowledge of God." Perhaps his meaning is that some of the permissive ones, though believers, did not *really know* God. To *know Him and what kind* of a God He is: is a blessing beyond comprehension ([Phil. 3:10](#)).

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED? *1 Cor. 15:35-41*: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?. and with what body do they come?"

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.

"All flesh is not the some flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds,

"There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial, but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory."

The opening verse to this passage must be clearly understood to appreciate what follows.

1. The passage itself, the preceding context, and Paul's reply all make it crystal clear that the question raised does not constitute a sincere inquiry, but an *objection, a challenge* by an unbeliever. The "man" referred to does not ask, he "says," "*How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*"

The posing of this challenge and Paul's reply to it are both simply another step in his great argument for the resurrection of the dead in general and of Christ in particular.

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<sup>138</sup> Or *morals*. With the deplorable moral condition of the Corinthian Church in view this warning takes on great significance.

2. Since the arguments advanced against the resurrection of the body strike a blow at a hope held dear by every true believer, the apostle then proceeds to declare "how" the (believing) dead are raised and "with what body" they will "come," or emerge from their state of death.

A DEVASTATING REPLY: As a reply, then, to a challenge to faith in God's Word, the apostle exclaims:

"Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die" (Ver. 36).

*Withering rebuke! Devastating reply!* How the apostle sweeps the ground from under the scoffer's feet! Had the apostle been answering an honest inquiry from one who gave the Holy Scriptures at least some credence, he might have asked as he later did of King Agrippa:

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8).

Ah, but Paul's words in I Cor. 15:36 are the reply of intelligent faith to blind unbelief "Do you mean," he asks, "that the resurrection of the body is not *possible*?" "All right," he goes on, as it were: "add together all your objections; multiply them by relating one to several others. Let unbelieving science come running up, all out of breath, to join you, explaining that in the light of chemistry, biology and half a dozen other sciences, the resurrection of the dead is obviously *impossible*. Yes, multiply your impossibilities, and there is still no other sane reply":

"Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die!"

After you have presented all your "strong proofs" of the impossibility of resurrection, look about you and see yourself surrounded with overwhelming evidence that God is constantly bringing the dead to life. Look about you and see how foolish is your unbelief in God! The grass, the flowers, the treenail of them are new, fresh bodies, in which dead seeds have come to life again! How, then, can the resurrection of the dead be *impossible*?

Our Lord, referring to the necessity for His death, made a similar declaration:

"Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn [kernel] of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

This is a fact observed by all. On what basis then, can it possibly be questioned or denied? Hence the apostle's rebuke of the unbeliever who closes his eyes to all this evidence. "Thou fool! Look about thee! Resurrection *impossible*! Why, you see it *demonstrated* on every hand?"

The author has long made it a practice to quote this question and its answer at the *cemetery service* of every funeral he has held, and it has been rewarding to see even avowed unbelievers develop serious expressions on their faces as they took in the apostle's answer to the question.

But the apostle's reply to the challenge of unbelief is also a full and satisfying answer to the sincere inquirer, for, pronounce the name, *God*, and you have affirmed the working of ten thousand times ten thousand miracles.

COMFORTING PROMISE: But now the apostle turns from rebuking unbelief to encouraging faith. Continuing with his illustration, but applying it now to believers, whose faith might be shaken by the objections of "science, falsely so called," the apostle says:

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain.

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his [its] own body" (Vers. 37,38).

How comforting! What does the farmer sow? *Not* "that body that shall be, but bare grain," not that fresh, living, golden stalk that - waves in the wind, but a dead, dry, hard, wrinkled kernel, as dead as the dry stone next to it. But lo, what happens to this dead kernel? God brings it to life and "giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him," living, fresh and golden-crowned! This is not fantasy; it is *fact which all of us observe in operation all about us*.

And this becomes the more wonderful when we realize the immensity of God's creation: all the kinds of "flesh": "*man ... beasts ... fishes ... birds; celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial,*" and all differing so greatly in their God-given glory (Vers. 39-41). How can any thoughtful person question the power of the Almighty to raise the dead up to new life?

SO ALSO IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD: *I Cor. 15:42-44*: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

"It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Referring to the profound and miraculous change that will take place in the believer when he is raised from the dead, the apostle lists four striking contrasts in the four verses above. In each of these he uses the words "*It is sown ... it is raised,*" so that there may be no doubt that this great change will be brought about in *the same body*.

Unbelievers who deny the resurrection of the body cannot view death in this way. They know nothing better than *burial*,<sup>139</sup> *the interment* of the dead body. But God says of the believer's body that it is "sown" and will be "raised" again.

1. *"It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption"*<sup>140</sup> (Ver. 42).

In death the body returns to dust and disintegrates as God told our fallen parents it would:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

With man's fall the creation about him also became subject to corruption. The herbs and flowers and trees and all we construct from them fall into decay, for God also said to Adam and Eve: "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake*" (Gen. 3:17). Thus we find ourselves joining the hymn writer in the lament; "*Change and decay in all about I see.*" but the instructed believer can rejoice with the Apostle Paul that:

"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:18).

And so the believer's body, like all he can see and touch about him, returns to the dust and goes into corruption. But this process will be reversed in the resurrection, for whatever the state of its decomposition, wherever its component parts may have "disappeared" to, "*it*," the same body that was "*sown in corruption*," will then be "*raised in incorruptibility*." *We will* then have bodies which *cannot* die or decay. What a prospect!

2. *"It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory"* (Ver. 43).

Has the reader ever thought of the death of the body as a *dishonorable discharge* of the "old man"? This is what it is, and we believers will be the first to admit it, for this body is the vehicle through which the Adamic nature operates. Indeed, our *deepest* desire is, or certainly should be, not to be rid of our sufferings and sorrows, but to be rid forever of temptation to sin. And, thank God, we *shall* be - and more, for this body which is "sown in dishonor" will be "*raised in glory*!"

As we see the glory of the lily, of the snowcapped mountains, of the evening sunset, we may be assured on the basis of God's immutable Word that we, who have so often failed our loving and faithful God, will yet, by His grace, be arrayed in glory "*far greater than these*," for whom God justifies *He also glorifies* (Rom. 8:30). Thus we read with regard to our Lord's return for us:

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<sup>139</sup> Even though they will be raised to stand in judgment and to be consigned to "the second death."

<sup>140</sup> Lit., *incorruptibility*.

"[He] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto *HIS GLORIOUS BODY*, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself"(Phil. 3:21).

When "the glory of the Lord" shone round about the shepherds of old, they were "sore afraid" (Luke 2:9). Why? Why should we too be "sore afraid" under such circumstances? Simply because "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). Ah, but the Lord Jesus Christ was "*delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for<sup>141</sup> our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ... AND REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD!*" (Rom. 4:25-5:2). "*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...*" (Heb. 6:19).

3. "*It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power*" (I Cor. 15:43).

How weak is the human body! Let the boxer, the wrestler, the football player, boast of their strength, but every night they, like the rest of us, must yield wearily to - *sleep*. Indeed, so insistent is this recurring demand of the human body for mental and physical rest that we actually *prepare* for it after each day's work! We remove our regular clothing, put on our night clothing and *lie down* on a bed constructed for the purpose, there to give ourselves up to an almost complete cessation of conscious life or thought. During this period, approximately one third of each day, even our continued breathing is in the hands of God alone. Often, in cases of illness, the body needs more rest, so that one may remain prostrate for days, or even indefinitely.

The ultimate in human weakness is, of course, death. When this approaches there may be a struggle to retain life, but in every case death finally wins, as the body is forced to concede defeat and yield up soul and spirit to God who gave them.

Scripture teaches us that "the power of death" has temporarily been given to "the devil" (Heb. 2:14) and that it is therefore our "enemy" (I Cor. 15:26). Nevertheless God can sanctify even this experience for the believer (Rom. 8:38,39). Indeed Paul himself declared:

"For to me ... TO DIE IS GAIN....

"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having A DESIRE TO DEPART AND TO BE WITH CHRIST, WHICH IS FAR BETTER" (Phil. 1:21-23).

"We are confident, I say, and WILLING RATHER, to be absent from the body, and TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD" (II Cor. 5:8).

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<sup>141</sup> Gr., *dia*, "on account of" "We are justified by *His blood* (Rom. 5:9).

Yet, while this is indeed "far better" than anything we may have endured or enjoyed on earth, it is still not the *best* God has in store for us, for some day this poor body, having been "sown in weakness," will be "*raised in power.*" Here the Spirit uses the Greek word for dynamic power, *dunamis*, the word from which the English *dynamite* is derived.

What a comfort to contemplate this as we see precious saints weakened and finally overcome by sickness and death!

4. "*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body*" (Ver. 44).

The word rendered "natural" here is *psuchikon* in the Greek. The *psuche* is, of course, the soul, thus we might say that "it is sown a *soulish, or soulual* body," i.e., a body that has been controlled or dominated by the soul.

The soul is the seat of man's emotions, desires and affections; that part of his make-up with which he experiences sorrow, joy, apprehension, remorse, satisfaction and the like. It is this part of our being which has hitherto remained in control. True, it is, or should be, our *desire* that our spirit, led by the Spirit of God, might have control, but how successful have we been in this? Thus Paul says that the body is sown "a *soulish* body," and that the *spiritual* body must come "afterward" (Ver. 46). This will take place when "it is raised a *spiritual* body," dominated completely by "the renewed mind." Doubtless this will constitute fully as great a change as that from physical corruption to incorruptibility, that from dishonor to glory, or that from weakness to power. Great changes, then, are by God's grace, to take place in us.

"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (Ver. 49).

THE EARTHY AND THE HEAVENLY: *I Cor. 15:45-50*: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening [life-giving] Spirit.

"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

Mark well that "the heavenly," in Ver. 49 above refers, not merely to angelic beings, but to *Christ*, for Ver. 47 introduces this thought with the words:

"The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second is *the Lord from heaven*."

It is *His* glorious image we are one day to bear! We are not merely to be changed into celestial beings, like the angels; we are to be *like Christ!*

There are two significant verses in Genesis 5 which depict for us what man was like before and after the fall.

Gen. 5:1: ". . . in the day that God created man, IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD MADE HE HIM."

Gen. 5:3: "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and BEGAT A SON IN HIS OWN LIKENESS, AFTER HIS IMAGE, and called his name Seth."

The former passage, of course, refers to *unfallen* man, while the latter refers to fallen man, for Seth was begotten in the likeness, and after the image, of *fallen* man, as are all of us. But God, in matchless grace had a wonderful plan to rescue those involved in Adam's fall. This plan centered in the truth stated in Rom. 8:3:

"... God, sending His own Son in THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Notice carefully: Christ did not come into the world as a sinner, but "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh" so that, dying as a sinner He might condemn sin and pay its penalty. There we have it:

Adam was made "*in the likeness of God*," but sinned and brought upon himself and all his progeny the curse of death.

As a result Seth [and Cain and Abel, for that matter] was begotten *in the likeness of Adam*, cursed by sin.

Then, in infinite grace, God sent His Son, "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*," that in the flesh He might condemn sin and judge it.

As a result we, who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall some day be *like Him*.

"As we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (Ver. 49; cf. [Phil. 3:20,21](#)).

WHEN WILL THIS TAKE PLACE? / *Cor. 15:51-58*: Thank God, we know a secret about that, for the apostle closes his discourse on the resurrection of believers with this glorious revelation:

"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall<sup>142</sup> all be changed.

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

"O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Note: "We shall *not* all sleep," for one generation of believers will be alive on earth when the Lord comes for the members of His Body. "But we *shall* all be changed." We have solid Scriptural proof for this in addition to the above passage from I Cor. 15.

Phil. 3:20,21: "For our conversation<sup>143</sup> is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:

"WHO SHALL CHANGE OUR VILE BODY, THAT IT MAY BE FASHIONED LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY. . . ."

Note too that this event will take place "*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*" (Ver. 52). Here we long and pray and try to be more like our blessed Lord, and His grace does effect changes in us, but the metamorphosis is so slow! But when our Lord comes for us, at some given moment, all of a sudden, "we shall be changed" - *into His likeness!*

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<sup>142</sup> Emphatic. Cf. with the "*shall not*" which precedes it.

<sup>143</sup> Citizenship, Gr. *politeuma*, from which our word "politics."

All at once, *incorruptibility, glory, power, a spiritual body!* All at once, "*we shall bear the image of the heavenly*", we shall be *like Christ!* This is far too profound a change for us, in our present state, to fully comprehend, but God's immutable Word declares that this is what will take place, so we may, and *should*, look for this blessed event with the keenest anticipation.

A moment's digression here is perhaps called for to point out that "the last trump" of Ver. 52 has nothing whatever to do with the seven trumpets of the Revelation. *None* of these will yet have sounded when the Lord comes for His saints. *All* will be sounded during the "great tribulation." How, then, could the seventh, the last, be sounded when our Lord comes for the members of His Body?

Further, regarding the seven trumpets of Revelation, Rev. 11:15 says simply: "and the seventh angel sounded," while the trumpet of I Cor. 15:52 is called in I Thes. 4:16, "*the trump of God.*"

The term, "the last trump," in I Cor. 15:52, is a *military expression*, denoting the trumpet which is sounded *at the last*, or the close of this dispensation, i.e., to call the soldiers home.

DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY" (Ver. 52).

What a triumphant climax to this great passage on the resurrection of believers! *Death swallowed up in victory!*

To help us view the whole in its proper perspective, the apostle asks and answers one more two-fold question. Referring, doubtless, to Hosea 13:14, he asks with great feeling:

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (Ver. 55).

I.e., what is it that makes death hurt so; and what gives the grave its irresistible power?

The answer?

"The sting of death is *sin*, and the strength of sin is *the law*" (Ver. 56).

It is sin that makes death *hurt* so, for death is the *result of sin*, so that our poor, broken bodies must finally be disposed of in corruption, dishonor and abject impotence (See [Rom. 5:12; 6:23; James 1:15](#)). Indeed, "the sting of death is *sin*."

But what makes the grave so always-victorious in the end? Wherein lies its assured victory; its power to always win? "The *strength of sin is the law*," says

Paul (Ver. 56). The Law was given specifically *"that every mouth may be stopped, and that all the world may become guilty before God"* (Rom. 3:19). It always works in favor of the accuser. It does not; it cannot defend the sinner. Thus, says Paul, *"the law worketh wrath"* (Rom. 4:15).

Yes, the "strength of sin," or the power that convicts of sin, resides in the Law.

With the Law, then, pronouncing us guilty, how can death be swallowed up in victory? Ah, listen to the apostle as he completes his statement:

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law,

**"BUT THANKS BE UNTO GOD, WHO GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST"** (Vers. 56,57).

The Law "worketh wrath"; it is a curse to us, but:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

**THE CLOSING PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Finally, in one great, powerful sentence, the apostle applies to us, in a most practical way, the great truths he has been teaching.

**"THEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE YE STEADFAST, UNMOVABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD, FORASMUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD"** (Ver. 58).

This exhortation implies that the adversities we all experience have a tendency to discourage us and make us feel like giving up, but our glorious future is the answer to them all. Note the absence of a single negative in this exhortation. He does not exhort us "Don't get discouraged; don't quit." Rather he says, *"Be ye steadfast unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."* And the basis for this stirring appeal?

**"FORASMUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD."**

## RESURRECTION POWER

How comes this flower to bloom so fair,  
With loveliest fragrance to fill the air?  
A short time ago the seed lay dead,  
The cold, wintry ground its desolate bed.

But now, behold, from the dampened earth,

Without a sound to betray its birth,  
This thing of beauty has blossomed and grown  
To possess a loveliness all its own.

And as we view it, standing there  
With a majesty quite beyond compare,  
A mighty conviction grips the heart:  
This lovely flow'r has a counterpart.

Our Savior once suffered and died for sin,  
Though no one so righteous as He had been.  
It seemed that the devil had sealed His doom  
As they buried His body in Joseph's tomb.

But what is this wonder that greets our eyes  
As the rays of the third morning's sun arise?  
Behold, He is risen! The grave could not hold  
The Author of Life; the Anointed of God!

And now the dead who have trusted His name,  
Though sleeping in Jesus, will rise again,  
With bodies more glorious than this flower  
"Sown in weakness, but raised in power!"

-Cornelius R. Stam

## CHAPTER XVI

### *I Corinthians 16:1-24*

GIVING UNDER GRACE: *I Cor. 16:1-4*: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

"And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

"And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me."

YOU CAN TELL that the writer of this commentary is not the author of I Corinthians. Were it so he would have brought the book to a close with that mighty Resurrection Chapter and its final appeal:

"Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

Thank God, however, that this writer is *not* the author of I Corinthians: *God is*. And, for His own good reasons, He adds still another passage of considerable length, beginning, to our surprise, with the words: "*Now concerning the collection.*" The *collection*? Yes, *the collection!*

We need not apologize for this, for the Bible has a way of defying all the rules of published literature, *remaining* all the while the *all time best seller* among books.

NOW CONCERNING THE COLLECTION: Liberals and Neo-Evangelicals, proclaiming the *Sermon on the Mount* rather than *the gospel of the grace of God*, have long used this verse as a basis for what they call the *Social Gospel*. They teach that believers have as great a responsibility to provide funds to feed the world's hungry and clothe its naked as they do to provide funds for "*the preaching of the cross.*" They are wrong, however, on three counts: (1.) *Dispensational*, (2.) *Spiritual*, and (3.) *Doctrinal*.

1. *Dispensational*: While we shall learn precious lessons from this passage about giving under grace, there is a very special reason why it particularly concerns *philanthropic giving*. Let us consider this, that we may be "*approved unto God ... rightly dividing the Word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15).

One of the basic laws of the kingdom to be established on earth concerns *communal living*. How often our Lord taught His followers as He did in Luke 12:32,33:

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

"*Sell that ye have and give alms*<sup>144</sup> (Cf. [Matt. 19:21](#); [Mark 10:17,21](#); [Luke 18:22](#); and the *Sermon on the Mount*.)

And at Pentecost, when the disciples were all "filled with the Holy Spirit," they joyfully practiced this divine program:

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

"And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44,45).

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common....

"Neither was there any among them that lacked. (Acts 4:32-34).

But as Messiah and His glorious kingdom were rejected, this wonderful program gradually broke down.

First there was the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who were stricken dead for cheating as to their finances ([Acts 5:1-11](#)), next "there arose a *murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration*," and this had to be attended to (Acts 6:1-3).

After the raising up of Paul and the establishment of the Gentile church at Antioch it became evident that the "all things common" program could no longer function; for here comes Agabus, with other prophets, "*from Jerusalem unto Antioch*," predicting that a *world-wide* famine was at hand (Acts 11:27,28).<sup>145</sup>

Now think this through. In a worldwide famine - at that time which segment of society would be apt to suffer most severely? The Judaeen Church, of course. Had Israel accepted her Messiah; had He been reigning on earth, everyone living spontaneously for his brother would have proved a delightful, rewarding way of life, but with the King rejected and absent, the funds in the common treasury began to dwindle and their investments having been liquidated for the common good, they

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<sup>144</sup> This important part of the *Social Gospel* seems to have escaped the liberals, the neo-evangelicals and the Charismatics!

<sup>145</sup> Interestingly, Luke gives us his personal testimony that Agabus' prophecy was correct: the terrible famine did strike "in the days of Claudius Caesar" (Ver. 28).

had no protection against the onslaught of a world-wide famine. This is why prophets came to Antioch "from Jerusalem" (Acts 11:27). At first there was not a man among them that lacked (Acts 4:34), but now the financial situation was so bleak that the Jewish believers had to appeal to their Gentile brethren for "relief."

Two important facts should be noted about the relief which the Gentile believers at Antioch sent:

a. They gave "*every man according to his ability*" (Acts 11:29,30). Thus the Gentile saints did not follow the Pentecostal program of "all things common"; they followed the age-old program of private enterprise and ownership.

How *wrong* it would be to follow the economic program of Pentecost today is clearly stated for us in I Tim. 5:8:

"But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel [Lit., unbeliever]."

b. These Gentile believers contributed gifts to "the *brethren* which dwelt in Judaea" (Acts 11:29). They did not attempt to feed the hungry worldwide or even to make the Jewish nation their responsibility, but only the members of the Jewish Church. And now, some seventeen years later, it is the same. The "collection" which Paul was taking up among the Gentile churches was to go *to their believing Jewish brethren*, and a generous offering it must have been, more than fulfilling the Judaeans' hope "*that we would remember the [i.e., their] poor*" (Gal. 2:10) in this difficult situation. Now, among the Gentiles, this had become almost, if not altogether, a Church-wide project.

*The churches of Macedonia and Achaia* participated (Rom. 15:26).

*The church at Rome* may well have participated, for the apostle writes to them about it.

*The churches of Galatia* participated (I Cor. 16:1).

*The Corinthian Church* had taken this project upon them, but had been dilatory in the fulfillment of their promises. The apostle had to urge them about a *year later*: "*Now therefore, perform the doing of it,*" and "*prove the sincerity of your love*" (II Cor. 8:8-11). After all that Paul wrote to emphasize their responsibility in this matter, it is to be hoped that they did their part - and generously. Yet when one considers II Corinthians, Chapters 8 and 9, it makes him wonder.

*Thessalonica, Philippi, Berea, Troas*, and other Gentile churches, not mentioned, are doubtless included with the "churches" in the areas listed above, plus the province of "Asia" (I Cor. 16:19).

An important dispensational lesson is taught here, as both the Jews' appeal and the Gentiles' response showed that they were beginning to recognize each other as one in Christ.

Obviously, then, there were special reasons behind this vast offering to the needy Judaeen saints. In the history of the Church there has never been another "collection" like it and probably never will be. Nor is *Scriptural* giving now mere *philanthropy*. The believer's financial contributions now constitute more than *benevolence*; they constitute *sacrifice for the cause of Christ, who died and rose again to save and justify condemned sinners*.

2. *Spiritual*: The Gentile churches, as we have shown, did not attempt to feed the hungry world-wide, or even to make the Jewish nation their responsibility, but only the members of the Judaeen *Church*. Why? Because these brethren were most urgently needed to supply the world's most *urgent need of all: Christ*. With all their failures, the Jewish believers still recognized and proclaimed Christ as God and the only Savior from sin.

Liberals and Neo-evangelicals would feed a hungry world and eliminate poverty. But could they do this - which they cannot - would this save perishing souls? It is entirely possible to feed and clothe the poor and in doing so merely prepare for them a more pleasant road to the Lake of Fire.

This is why we emphasize the special circumstances involved in Paul's effort to gather a "relief" offering for the impoverished Judaeen saints. Apart from this his great desire was to obtain funds to proclaim "*the gospel of the grace of God*" far and wide ([II Cor. 10:13-16](#), and notice "*our rule*").

3. *Doctrinal*: First, as to supplying material needs to the world and to believers, we have the plain words of Scripture:

Gal. 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

However, philanthropic giving is not paramount in "this present evil age," but rather such sacrificial giving as will help to reach the lost with "the gospel of the grace of God" and will promote the spiritual welfare of believers, that they in turn may be strong in the faith and workmen whom He can approve (See [Acts 20:24](#); [Acts 16:25](#); [II Tim. 2:15](#)).

When my father, the founder of the *Star of Hope Mission* of Paterson, N. J., drew near to the end of his life, he asked me: "Neill, which phase of the work at the *Star of Hope* do you think was most fruitful spiritually? First we discussed those efforts in which those who attended got some material gift or advantage: The clothes dispensaries? No. The boys' basketry classes or the girls' sewing classes? No. The mothers' sewing classes, where we gave them the materials and helped them to sew coats, dresses, etc., for their families? No. Then we went to the institutional

work: The hospitals, the jails, the alms house and other institutions? No. No. No. The open air meetings, then, or the home gospel meetings? No. Some souls were saved at all of these, but the great soul-saving ministry took place at those *Bible Conferences* where such men of God as Ironside, Gaebelin (Arno C.), Ottman and others expounded the Word to capacity audiences (about 900). Those were the days when many Fundamentalist churches were going on in dispensational truth, recovering such important distinctions as those between the coming of Christ for His own and His return to reign; between law and grace, etc. As a result true evangelism was stimulated both here and in Europe, along with a powerful thrust in foreign missionary work.

And such days can come again if sincere believers will wholeheartedly *support* those who faithfully engage in what Paul calls:

"MY GOSPEL, AND THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY" (Rom. 16:25).

GOD'S PLAN FOR RAISING FUNDS: *1 Cor. 16:1,2*: Many Christians are very sensitive about the subject of their giving to the work of the Lord. Let the pastor *fail* to remind his hearers of their obligations to *witness* for Christ, to *work* for Him and to *walk* uprightly, and true believers will charge him with unfaithfulness in the ministry. But let him remind them of their *financial* obligations toward the cause of Christ, and these same people will often react very differently., Then they will say: "Why does he have to talk about money? Why can't he trust the Lord to supply the needs of the work?"

Some, who follow George Mueller rather than the Word of God, actually believe that those engaged in the work of the Lord show a lack of faith and spirituality when they make public mention of financial needs. They feel that these things should be mentioned to the Lord alone.

Yet when we go to the Scriptures we find men of God consistently bringing the material needs of His work to the attention of His people, and binding upon their hearts their obligation to do their part.

Some of the greatest men of God of Bible times proved to be outstandingly capable both in the raising and handling of funds for the Lord's work, and were honored as good stewards of God's treasury.

When God was about to have the children of Israel build Him a tabernacle, He did not instruct Moses merely to announce the project, without mentioning the financial needs. He did not say: "Simply trust Me, and I will open their hearts to give." On the contrary he instructed Moses to *ask* the people to *contribute* toward the work:

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering" (Ex. 25:1,2).

Note: it was a *free-will offering* Moses was to take up among the people.

Just so, when David prepared for the building of the temple by his son, he did not merely make his own contributions to the work and trust the Lord to move the hearts of others to do likewise. On the contrary, he called upon the people to *do their part* through their leaders, pointing to what he himself had done as an assurance that he was with them in it ([I Chron. 29:2-9](#)).

It may be objected that this was because God then dwelt among His people in earthly houses, but this objection is not valid, for today God is building a house of infinitely greater glory, "*an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye [believers] also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Eph. 2:21,22). In the building of this glorious temple, God has been pleased to use gospel tracts and Bible study literature, missions and church buildings, radio programs and evangelists, pastors and teachers to lead in the work, and all this calls for financial support from His people.

PAUL AS A "MONEY RAISER": Those who entertain the unscriptural notion that truly spiritual men of God will not mention the needs of the work to any but the Lord, should consider the case of the Apostle Paul. Were he living today, he would certainly be considered a diligent and successful "money raiser" for the Lord's work.

As the kingdom program with its "all things common" gave place to the dispensation of the mystery, and those who had disposed of their goods to enter the kingdom began to lack, Paul was used more than once "to send relief" to these needy saints ([Acts 11:29,30](#), [Rom. 15:25,26](#)). Indeed, after his agreement with the apostles of the circumcision to help their poor ([Gal. 2:10](#)), he made an organized effort, as we have seen, to raise funds among the Gentile churches of Macedonia, Achaia, Galatia and the rest of Asia Minor, "for the poor saints at Jerusalem."

Twice the apostle sent Titus to awaken the wealthy but ungenerous Corinthians to their financial responsibilities ([11 Cor. 8:6; 9:3](#)) and in his letters to them he did not refrain from advising them of poor churches who were doing better than they (11 Cor. 8:1-5) or from reminding them of their good intentions of the year previous, urging them to fulfill the undertaking without further delay, lest he and they should both be embarrassed by their failure to do their part (II Cor. 8:10,11; 9:2-5).

Those who feel that appeals for funds for the Lord's work indicate a lack of faith and spirituality will probably be surprised to find that the Apostle Paul, in his letters to the churches, has *more* to say about this matter *than any other writer in the Bible*. And this is just as it should be, for Paul was the apostle of *grace*, and the spirit of giving should be the believer's natural response to the infinite grace bestowed upon him (See [II Cor. 8:9](#)), moreover, the fact that God is still, after 1900

years, giving men an opportunity to be saved by grace, through faith in Christ alone, should stir the hearts of all true believers to make sacrifices to get the message out to unsaved millions with all possible speed. An extended period of grace should not make us complacent but rather the more concerned to win the lost to Christ before it is eternally too late.

It is true, to be sure, that some men of God have acted in the energy of the flesh in their efforts to raise funds for the Lord's work, while others, greedy for filthy lucre, have brought reproach upon the name of Christ by using the Lord's work for their own material advantage. It is to be feared that this flagrant disregard of the Word and will of God, especially among high-priced evangelists, who offer their services for money and live in luxury on the sacrifices of others, has discouraged many sincere Christians from giving. Such unworthy men should also learn from the Apostle Paul, that he never raised funds for his own advantage and that he was always completely honorable in his use of the funds entrusted to him (See [I Cor. 16:3,4](#); [II Cor. 8:19-23](#); [9:3-5](#)).

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN GIVING.. In these two first verses of I Cor. 16, we already have several important facts to note with regard to orderly Christian giving. As an apostle of Jesus Christ Paul "*ordered*," he *directed* his followers to heed the following guidelines in their giving.

1. The apostle does not explicitly state what percentage of his income the believer should contribute toward the cause of Christ. He does not place us under the Law.

2. He does, however, teach *systematic* giving:

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store. . . . "

3. He teaches *proportionate* giving:

". . . let every one of you lay by him in store as God *hath prospered him*."

Note he is to give, not in proportion to what others are giving, but in proportion to *his ability to give*: "*as God hath prospered him*."

4. These guidelines are to be observed by *all*. Note the words: "let EVERY ONE OF YOU lay by him in store [for the Lord's work] as God hath prospered him..." (Ver. 2).

It is a pity that so few people in rich, complacent America know anything about *sacrificial* giving to the Lord's work, and the few who do are generally *the poor*. The hearts of sincere Christian leaders are often burdened about (1.) poor believers who give so sacrificially of their means, and (2.) rich, or well-off, believers who contribute but a tiny percentage of the abundance with which God has

entrusted them. Surely it is high time for a great change here, a renewed appreciation of the riches of God's grace to us.

The particular reason why the apostle directed the Corinthian believers to lay their gifts up "in store" is clear: "*that there be no gatherings when I come*" (Ver. 2). There would be more important things to do and talk about when he appeared on the scene.

Finally, observe the apostle's own integrity here, and his insistence on the integrity of any who might have any part in conveying this vast offering (from so many churches) to Jerusalem.<sup>146</sup>

Those chosen were to be from their own number, at least two (11 Cor. 8:16-24), and accredited in *writing* ("by your letters"), to bring their "liberality" to Jerusalem (Ver. 3).<sup>147</sup>

To further insure that all will be done "decently and in order," he delicately reminds them of his apostolic authority: "whomsoever ye shall approve ... *them will I send*" (Ver. 3). "And if it be meet [proper] that I go also, *they shall go with me*" (Ver. 4).

There were also those who were chosen by the churches at large (II Cor. 8:16-19), further insuring the veracity of the undertaking, as the apostle states:

"Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Cor. 8:20,21).

What a lesson for us here, and especially for Christian leaders, that irresponsibility in fiscal matters is a sin; that not only should we have clear consciences in our use of the funds entrusted to us but we should prove our integrity by careful provisions and accurate records.

Much more is said about financial stewardship in *II Corinthians*, especially chapters 8 and 9. We will deal in depth with these when - and if - God spares us to write a commentary also on that precious epistle.

I WILL COME UNTO YOU: *I Cor. 16:5-9*: "Now I will come unto you when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

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<sup>146</sup> The word "thousands" in Acts 21:20 is the Gr. *urias*, from which our myriads. Technically *urias* denotes *ten* thousand, thus "many" *urias* means many tens of thousands. The word *urias*, however also denotes any vast number. So in any case, the number of Jews to whom the Gentiles were here ministering must have been enormous.

<sup>147</sup> Note: He lets them know that he *assumes* their gift will be generous.

"And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

"For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

"But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

"For a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."

THE APOSTLE'S ITINERARY: Two things are clear from a study of this rather complex passage.<sup>148</sup> First, Paul had definitely planned to visit Corinth on his way to Jerusalem: "*I will come unto you ... for I do pass through Macedonia*" (Ver. 5 cf. Vers. 3,4). But he did not wish to make only a brief appearance (Ver. 7). This is natural, for when he did arrive there would be many things to say and much to do. There would have to be much reproof, rebuke and exhortation (I Cor. 4:19; II Cor. 13:2,3); much help would be needed to endeavor to straighten things out that had not yet been set aright. Indeed he hoped that by such a visit unity and order might be so fully restored that they would wish to bring him on his way to the next destination (Ver. 6).

It is also clear, however, that his itinerary had not yet been firmly established. Note the phrases, "*it may be .... I trust to tarry .... if the Lord permit*" (Vers. 6,7). As we know from 11 Corinthians the apostle was not able to go to Corinth at the time planned; indeed, it is possible he did not get there at all after this.<sup>149</sup>

"I WILL TARRY AT EPHESUS UNTIL PENTECOST" *I Cor. 16:8*: i.e., until its near approach, for later, *after* leaving Ephesus, we find him hastening, "*if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost*" (Acts 20:16).

Little wonder Paul planned to tarry at Ephesus for some time. God had used him to establish a strong church there. For three months he had spoken boldly in the synagogue there, "disputing and persuading" (Acts 19:8). Then for two years he "disputed daily" in "the school of ... Tyrannus" (Vers. 9,10). Indeed he used this school as headquarters for the evangelization of "all Asia" (Ver. 10), Asia being, of course, a province of Asia Minor. And so great were the spiritual victories that ere long many of these converted pagans united in a *spontaneous* book-burning, destroying those superstitious writings which had taught them their former "curious arts." And this was a *public* burning, perhaps in the center of the city, for it was done "before all men" (Ver. 19).

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<sup>148</sup> In II Cor. 1:8,15-24 Paul himself explains the problem associated with his stopping at Corinth on his way to Jerusalem (perhaps to receive their contribution for Jerusalem) or on his return from Jerusalem.

<sup>149</sup> Note: it is of *this* visit that he writes: "this is the *third* time I am coming to you" (II Cor. 13:1). Bible commentators are not agreed as to when the *second* visit might have taken place.

"... and they counted the price of them, and found it *fifty thousand pieces of silver*.

"So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" (Vers. 19, 20).

Little wonder the apostle now writes the Corinthians: "*But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost*."

"for a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (I Cor. 16:8,9).

Note: he does not say, "*but there are many adversaries*"; he says "*and there are many adversaries*." I.e., this was further reason for him to stay on a while longer. Among other adversaries, we know that there were the silversmiths led by Demetrius,<sup>150</sup> men who made "*no small gain*" making shrines for Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians. And now they raised "*no small stir*" as Demetrius complained:

". . . that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands" (Acts 19:26).<sup>151</sup>

All these were the entrenched foes, not only of Paul, but of the gospel, and he was determined by the grace of God to have the victory over them. The Acts account shows that his desire was graciously fulfilled.

IF TIMOTHEUS COME: *I Cor. 16:10,11*: "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."

"Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me; for I look for him with the brethren."

Prior to the uproar at Ephesus Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, seemingly to ascertain from other saints and churches whether it would be wise for the apostle to pay the Corinthians that extended visit or not. As indicated above he awaited their return and, of course, whatever news they might have to bring.

Timothy was now sent, doubtless, for whatever spiritual help he might impart to the Corinthian believers. But why Erastus? Erastus was at that time the Treasurer of the City of Corinth ([Rom. 16:23](#)), if indeed Paul did finally pay that extended visit to Corinth and write the Roman believers from there. In any case he was the

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<sup>150</sup> Perhaps also "*Alexander the coppersmith*," (II Tim. 4:14), for Timothy was at Ephesus when Paul sent him this warning.

<sup>151</sup> There is much of great interest in the account of the uproar at Ephesus, which is dealt with in depth in the author's commentary on *Acts, Dispensationally Considered* (4 Vol.).

treasurer of a city and an ideal choice to urge the Corinthians to participate generously in the offering to be sent by the Gentile churches to Jerusalem.

As we learn from Acts 19:22, the apostle sent these two men to *Macedonia*, not specifically to Corinth, nor is there any indication that they did go to Corinth, or even as far as Greece. It may well be that their information regarding the Corinthian church was not favorable, for in Acts 20:1-3 we find Paul himself going into Macedonia and as far south as Greece (for three months) but again, no mention of Corinth, which one would surely expect had his proposed visit with them materialized at that time.

Since evidently, it had been left to Timothy and Erastus whether they should visit Corinth, Paul here writes: "*If Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear .... Let no man despise him*" (Vers. 10,11).

What a shame! Spiritually, morally, and where true courage was concerned, Timothy was head and shoulders above the Corinthian believers. And should *he* be intimidated by *them*! Paul was constrained to write thus to the Corinthians because of Timothy's delicate condition and gentle nature. Paul had written to Timothy about his mother, his grandmother, his youth, his tears, and had had to urge him to be a "good soldier," prescribing "a little wine" for his "often infirmities." This indicated delicacy of nature, but did not imply that he was not a faithful servant of Christ and willing, indeed, to "endure hardness" for Him. The irresponsible Corinthians surely had much to learn from him. It appears, however, that this opportunity was not given to them.

In the early part of this, Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers, he had to write:

"Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power" (I Cor. 4:18,19).

Oh, there was lots of *talk* at the Corinthian church, but little substance; and little of the power of the Spirit!

It seems that this attitude had not been substantially changed, for in opening his second epistle to them he explains why, though so near, he had not visited them:

"Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul, that *to spare you* I come not as yet to Corinth" (Ver. 23; cf. I Cor. 4:21).

How edifying, how helpful, would a visit from Paul have been had he come "with a rod," and *they* hardly even recognizing his apostolic authority?

TWO CHRISTIAN GENTLEMEN: *1 Cor. 16:12*: "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time."

In Paul and Apollos we have two outstanding Christian gentlemen from whom we all do well to learn.

Apollos had appeared among the Ephesian believers as "*an eloquent man ... mighty in the Scriptures ... instructed in the way of the Lord ... fervent in spirit,*" who "*spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord...*" yet he was humble enough to sit at the feet of Aquila and Priscilla, and learn of those further truths revealed by our Lord to the Apostle Paul ([Acts 18:24-26](#)).

Later at Corinth, some had almost worshipped him, making light of Paul's apostolic authority. The Corinthian believers in general were sectarian, the various cliques claiming allegiance to Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas or Christ, but it seemed they were most determined to make rivals of Paul and Apollos so that each believer was a follower *either* of the one or of the other. Paul wrote them in no uncertain terms that they were wrong in this and doing great harm to the church by their sectarianism. Hear him protest:

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by [not on] whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"

"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

"So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

"NOW HE THAT PLANTETH AND HE THAT WATERETH ARE ONE. . ." (*1 Cor. 3:5-8*).

Paul and Apollos showed by their lives and ministries that *they* did not consider each other rivals, but co-workers for Christ. But here in *1 Cor. 16:12* we find their greatness as Christian gentlemen at its most splendid height. Paul says, "[I] *greatly desired* him to come unto you." What? "greatly desired" *Apollos* to go to Corinth? why, some there almost worshipped him while belittling Paul. Well, Apollos would be just the man to go there and "water" the truths which Paul had written here in *1 Corinthians*. But when he broached the matter to Apollos, even urging him earnestly to go, Apollos would have none of it. "His will was *not at all* to come at this time," but perhaps at a more convenient, or appropriate time. What an example both these men were to the Corinthian brethren - and should be to us!

CLOSING EXHORTATIONS: *1 Cor. 16:13-18*: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you [acquaint yourselves] like men, be strong.

"Let all your things be done with charity.

"I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints).

"That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to everyone that helpeth with us, and laboreth.

"I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

"For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such."

The closing words of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers are sad, yet filled with instruction and blessing for us who live in a day when the Church, yes the true Church of believers in Christ, is so much like the church at Corinth.

He does not, after having written a letter so full of rebuke and reproof, smooth it all over by kind words at the end. He had written "*out of much affliction and anguish,*" and "*with many tears,*" and did not wish them to forget all about it now as though he had had his say, and they could simply go on from here. No, he wanted them to take his criticisms and exhortations to heart and begin anew.

The caution the apostle showed in his opening words, he shows again in his closing salutation. He is careful not to give them empty, undeserved praise, yet gives them clear evidence of his sincere love for them.

So the apostle begins with the exhortation: "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith*" (Ver. 13). I.e., be alert to Satan's wiles and to your own tendencies to yield to sin and lose ground in the Christian life, and thus "*stand fast in the faith.*" They had been so concerned about their own petty interests that they were not standing fast in the faith; they were yielding ground to the enemy, much as the Church does today.

"*Acquit yourselves like men; be strong*" (Ver. 13). The "babes" at Corinth could as yet digest nothing but the milk of the Word; they could not be *encouraged* in their *stand* as were the beloved Philippians, faithful soldiers of Christ, to whom Paul could write:

". . . that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries....

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:27-29).

No, the Corinthians must first grow up from spiritual infancy to spiritual manhood before they can be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Hence Paul's exhortation, "Acquit yourselves like men"; be babes in Christ no longer. Grow up!

Finally, "Let everything you do be done in love." Sad it is that Paul had to write that long "Love Chapter" because they were so lacking in it - as are so many of us today.

"The house of Stephanas," had "*addicted*" themselves to the ministry of the saints" (Ver. 15). Think of it. Here among all the "sad cases" at Corinth was one household who had "*addicted*" themselves to serving other believers! And note: Paul does not merely say, "be thankful for such," but "*submit yourselves unto such*" (Ver. 16). *These* are the kind you should gladly bow to when problems arise.

And then, he brings up a matter that should have made these Corinthians weep. "I'm glad," he says, "for the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus" (Evidently from Corinth), "*for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied*" (Ver. 17).

Again, what shame! Could not that great Corinthian church have helped Paul just a bit in his great struggle at Ephesus? Of course, but that they did *not* help him in his ministry is evident, not only from this passage, but from others like II Cor. 11:7-9:

". . . I have preached to you the gospel of God freely,

"I robbed other churches,<sup>152</sup> [accepting] wages from them to do you service.

"And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied....."

But note carefully: the apostle does not merely exhort the Corinthians to be grateful for the three men who had so generously supplied what was *their* due to the apostle; he instructs *them* to give them special recognition.

Such as Paul here sets forth as examples to the Corinthian believers, had heretofore been only lightly considered by the more self-important among them. Paul declares that, on the contrary, they who serve and sacrifice for the cause of Christ should be recognized, respected, honored, heeded, and their advice given greater weight than that of others.

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<sup>152</sup> Like the Thessalonians, the Philippians and "the churches of Macedonia."

CLOSING SALUTATION: *1 Cor 16:19-24*: "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

"All the brethren greet you; greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

"The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

"My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

How precious a closing salutation! Here is encouragement indeed for any fallen Corinthian saint who is willing to receive it.

Ver. 16: *"The churches of Asia salute you."*

Paul had doubtless told the believers at these churches about the great work which God had done at Corinth, and it is possible that he had asked them to remember the Corinthian believers in their prayers. And now the brethren from all these "Asian" churches had asked Paul to send their greetings to the Corinthian believers.

Next: *"Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."*

Aquila and Priscilla were the beloved tentmakers who gave Paul a home and employment when he first came to Corinth ([Acts 18:3](#)). They had witnessed the founding of this great congregation, had seen God's blessing on Paul's ministry there and must often have discussed this with the members of "the church in their house" at Ephesus. And now they all joined Aquila and Priscilla in sending their very special ("much") greetings.

Ver. 20: *"All the brethren greet you....."*

It is against this background that the apostle continues: *"Greet ye one another. . . ."* "The churches of Asia ... Aquila and Priscilla ... the church in their house [and] all the brethren greet you." Now, *"greet ye one another."*

Have you ever attended a church where the atmosphere was cold and forbidding? No one said "Good morning; I'm glad to see you," or gave you a friendly handshake. After the service they all filed out, barely speaking to each other or to you. Did you feel like ever again attending that church?

Such a congregation, evidently had the church at Corinth become. Everyone, it seemed, was doing "his thing" (16:14), and not in love. This was the kind of congregation where the individual members would not be quick to greet each other warmly - except within each clique. Rather there were undercurrents of suspicion, bad feelings and unkind gossip.

Hoping now that his earnest exhortation would speak to their hearts, the apostle says in effect: All here, and throughout "Asia" send their greetings. Now "*greet ye one another with an holy kiss*" (i.e., heartily).

Does the apostle promote promiscuous kissing here? Of course not.

1. Since greeting one another with a kiss was evidently a custom of that time and place - as it is in some lands today (i.e., France) - the passage does not bind us to greet each other precisely in this way. Its parallel in America today would be a hearty handshake.

2. In any case the passage is written directly to and about "brethren," and does *not* teach or sanction promiscuous kissing as a greeting. Thus the apostle rather urges warm greetings between those of God's people who are brought together. Let us apply it to our American churches today, to whom Paul would doubtless says: "*Greet one another with a warm, hearty handshake.*"

In many churches the members greet each other with a word or a nod, but this alone can even *increase* the coldness of the atmosphere. As Jim enters the door he sees Joe, whom he cannot abide! "Morning Joe," he says and Joe replies coldly, as both go their ways saying to themselves, "*That was a cold greeting!*"

It might have been quite different had Jim given Joe a warm word and a hearty handshake along with his "Good morning." Then Joe would doubtless have responded and both would have felt better about each other.

This, in the light of the context of Scripture, and of human customs, is the sense of this passage: "*Greet ye one another warmly and heartily.*"

A PROTECTIVE MEASURE: With imposters actually circulating letters "as from Paul" (II Thes. 2:2), the apostle made certain that his *signature* was included in each letter.<sup>153</sup> Here in I Corinthians he writes the closing salutation *with his own hand* (I Cor. 16:21-24). In Colossians it is the same (See [Col. 4:18](#)). In II Thes. 3:17 he writes:

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<sup>153</sup> We refer to his epistles *to the Gentiles*, for he was '*the apostle of the Gentiles*' (Rom. 11:13). His letter to the Hebrews was purposely kept anonymous, though not anonymous to the *readers*. It was easy for them to tell who the writer was.

"The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is *the token in every epistle: so I write.*"

These three are the only cases, however, where we find his signature at the close of his letter. This must mean that in the others he writes the opening salutation with his own hand, for we do find his *name* in the opening sentence of each letter. Perhaps in some cases he wrote both opening and closing salutations with his own hand.

We know that it was his custom to dictate his letters, for in Rom. 16:22 Tertius inserts his greeting to the Roman Christians with the words:

"I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord."

The further fact that it was Paul's *custom* to sign his letters with his own hand confirms the above statement that it was also his custom to dictate his letters.

There was also one exception to this, however: his letter to the Galatians. Due to the seriousness of the circumstances he chose to write this one with his own hand. The KJV translators however, departed from the *Received Text* at 6:11 and may have obscured the apostle's meaning. Our version reads, "Ye see *how large a letter* I have written...." But Galatians is not a large letter, but one of his smaller ones. The word "letter" is plural in the Greek, so that he speaks of the size of the letters with which he writes rather than the length of the entire epistle. We know that he had serious eye trouble of some kind ([Gal. 4:13-15](#)), and this doubtless forced him to write in large letters. He uses this fact to emphasize upon the Galatian believers: "It is *I* pleading thus with you."

Returning to the closing words of I Corinthians, Paul surely does not make salvation contingent upon their love for Christ in 16:22. Rather it appears that there were some unbelievers or nominal believers among them who did not love the Lord Jesus Christ and affected the Corinthian saints adversely. The apostle thus warns these that at the Lord's coming they will be cursed, for then the dispensation of grace will have been brought to a close. There is much evidence that Paul had no idea that the Lord might delay His coming for any great length of time. He rather expected to be living when the Rapture took place ([I Thes. 4:16-18](#)). Thus his intense effort to reach all men with the gospel of grace, and his exhortation to the saints to "*redeem the time, because the days are evil*" (Eph. 5:15,16) - i.e., and the day of grace about to close.

How touching to find the apostle's last words to these delinquent Christians, words of grace and love, invoking God's grace and assuring them of his love (Vers. 23,24).